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WITHDRAWN

By

Right Rev. Jeremias Bonomelli, D.D.

BISHOP OF CREMONA

TRANSLATED BY

RIGHT REV. THOMAS SEBASTIAN BYRNE, D.D.

BISHOP OF NASHVILLE

VOLUME V

Homilies of the Common of Saints. Vol. I

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✠JOHN M. FARLEY,
Archbishop of New York.

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PREFACE [1]

I think it may be well at the beginning of this fifth volume of my *Series of Homilies* to make a few preparatory remarks, which in my judgment are important and deserve to be read and pondered by those engaged in preaching the Sacred Word.

"And let them wince who have their withers wrung," as the greatest of poets says; but I take comfort from what he adds:

> "What though, when tasted first, thy voice shall prove
> Unwelcome; on digestion it will turn
> To vital nourishment."

I make bold to call the attention of the priests who will read me to what appears to me a defect in the preaching of these latter days, at least, in the dioceses with which I am familiar. I have hinted at this in the Preface to my translation of Monsabré, but here I intend not only to repeat and enforce what I have there said, but also to speak out and explain more fully what I think, and what I know many other bishops also think.

[1] What is said here of *Conferences* may be applied to much of the pulpit oratory of this country.—Tr.

That style of preaching which goes under the name of *Conferences,* has come to be so extraordinarily common that four-fifths of the sermons for Advent and Lent, for Novenas and Octaves, and even for the Month of May, are all so-called *Conferences.* Is this an evil, or is it a good? Are things to go on in this way, or is a change necessary? I shall set down here some observations suggested to me by common-sense and experience, and let the reader judge.

This style of preaching comes to us from France, more especially from Paris, and the first to give us an example of it may be said to have been the learned Bishop of Ermopoli, Dionysius Frayssinous, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, in his classical work: *The Defence of Christianity.* He was followed by the incomparable Lacordaire; then came Fathers Ventura, Ravignan, Felix, Monsabré, and Mgr. Houlst, Rector of the Catholic University of Paris and deputy of the French Parliament. As is usual, especially in the case of anything novel, the example of these great men produced a host of followers in Italy; in fact, there is hardly a preacher of any note, or one who fancies himself such, who does not think it is his right and his duty to get up his little course of *Conferences.* Let us explain.

It is hardly necessary to say that Catholic

truth, as announced by Christ and the apostles, and of which the Church is the perpetual and infallible depositary, is as unchangeable as is God Himself. But if the truth itself is unchangeable, the form in which it is set forth, or preaching, is not. From the days of St. Peter and St. Paul to our own Gospel truth has ever been identically the same; but what a variety of ways there has been of announcing, developing, and defending it! In the first four centuries, face to face with Paganism, the method of presenting it was pre-eminently polemical, and so also was it polemical when combating the heresies as they arose, and of this method we have splendid examples in the Fathers from Justin and Tertullian to Athanasius and Augustine. When Paganism and the heresies of the first centuries had been vanquished, which, however, continued to crop out later under a variety of forms, a new period wholly distinct from the first was entered upon. Reason and science were pressed into the service of revealed truth and aided in developing its proofs and in bringing out and illustrating its harmonies; the representatives of this period were the Doctors from St. John Damascene to St. Thomas, in whom it reached its culminating point. If the teaching and the method of preaching of this period be compared with the teaching and the method of preaching of the

preceding period it will be seen what a difference there is between the two.

Years went on and times changed; new errors succeeded to the old; and it was felt that new methods were necessary both in the statement of truth and in its defence; this period extended from Luther to Voltaire, and during it you see that the Church in her theological teaching, with reference to the educated, and in her popular and catechetical teaching, with reference to the multitude, assumed a wholly different attitude, and one suited to the changed character of the times. From Voltaire, from the French Revolution, to our own day, the social, scientific, and religious conditions have undergone a profound transformation; reason, proud of its triumphs, has assailed the Faith in a thousand ways, turning against it all the weapons of science, neither respecting nor bowing before a single dogma. A conflict more gigantic and rabid than that which is fiercely raging under our very eyes, between faith, as embodied in the Church on the one hand, and modern misbelief, parading under the arrogant name of science on the other, can not be conceived. New methods of defence must be adopted to repel new forms of error; the new tactics of the assailants demand new tactics in the defenders; new arms of assault must be opposed with new arms of defence; faith is

assailed in the name of reason, and in the name of reason must the assaults be repelled. It is a terrible duel in which the arms must be equal, the arms of reason, which alone are accepted by modern misbelief.

From this wholly new condition of things, resulting from this last phase of error as opposed to revealed truth, arises and must necessarily arise, by force of circumstances, a new form of preaching, which is called *Conference.* Those who announce and defend the truths of the Gospel must imitate physicians, who prescribe remedies suited to the nature and intensity of the disease, and who vary their use according to time and place, the age and strength of the patient. And since the evolution of the anti-Christian error of modern times manifested itself chiefly in France, and more properly speaking in Paris, the heart of France, it was but natural that in Paris the religious *Conference,* now so common, should have been first introduced.

From what has been said it is clear that, not only am I not opposed to the method of preaching known as *Conference,* but I think it necessary, if we are to make head against the errors that threaten Christian society and invade it from all sides. Still one may very readily admit and even affirm that a certain kind of medicine is necessary for the sick, and

yet find fault with it and condemn it when it is used to excess and in the case of all classes of patients. I admit that *Conferences* are both useful and necessary, but within certain limits as regards place, persons, and degree, and these limits I see nearly everywhere transgressed. And now let us come to what is solid and practical.

The *Conference* originated in France and the great apologists and orators of France gave splendid proofs of its utility. Every one will admit that *Conferences* were and are necessary in that immense capital, which is, as it were, an epitome of the whole of France and of a great part of Europe; where religious indifference and unbelief have set up their tents and reign as queens; where out of above two millions of inhabitants, not a hundred thousand enter a church or frequent the Sacraments; and where a considerable number of parents do not even have their children baptized. Modern Paris may be compared to Pagan Rome at the time of St. Cornelius and St. Cyprian. In Rome the bulk of people were Pagans and idolators, in Paris the majority are not Christian; what religion they possess it would be difficult to say; they idolize pleasure, and therefore money, which purchases pleasure. For the people of this city and for the people of other cities where similar religious, moral,

and social conditions prevail the fundamental truths of religion must be established, the primary truths of even the natural order demonstrated, the more common and vulgar errors refuted, the sophisms of a daring and insolent science held up to scorn, of a science that now more than in Pagan times denies everything and calls everything in question. *Conferences,* when such is their scope, are indeed necessary; but who does not realize that it would be simply ridiculous to give to the good country people, to the workmen of our towns, and even to the citizens of provincial cities *Conferences,* that would be perfectly in place in Paris, Lyons, and Marseilles, in Milan, Bologna, Florence, and Rome, or in any other city where the number and character of the audience would justify them and make them necessary? In setting forth and demonstrating the truths of faith, or in defending them, the sacred orator ought always to have in view the good of the greatest number of his hearers; to do otherwise would be to take leave of his common-sense, to fail in his duty, and to be guilty of an unpardonable fault. Now, my good readers, let me ask you: Are the majority of the audiences of the country, of populous towns, and even of very many cities, fitted by talent and previous study to comprehend such preaching and to derive profit from it? I do not hesitate an

instant to deny it. If we except a few, aye a very few, who are full of themselves, who have not made any serious studies, or whose studies have been entirely profane, and who are utterly incapable of reasoning on religious and metaphysical subjects, the audiences of our day are mostly good Christians and pious women, wholly unable to see and appreciate the force of subtle and difficult arguments. Sad and sorrowful experience teaches us that the rich and educated, as a class, those who might be able to follow and understand a long and difficult line of reasoning pursued by the speaker, seem to have nearly severed their connection with the Church and to have made it a rule never to cross its threshold. To attempt to give *Conferences* upon exalted subjects and to follow out long trains of reasoning before audiences incapable of understanding them, is, then, a real loss of time, or at least something quite useless.

How often have I listened to *Conferences,* delivered, too, by good speakers, and been constrained to say to myself: "Time lost! Labor in vain!" I looked around upon the audiences and saw that three-fourths of those present were women, mostly parishioners; the few men scattered here and there were workmen, peasants, and a few of the well-to-do class, all good Christians. These good people list-

ened respectfully, were quiet and attentive; but a glance at them was sufficient to be absolutely certain that they understood little or nothing of what the speaker was earnestly trying to enforce, and that the long and labored *Conference* left the minds of those poor people absolutely empty. I wish those brave preachers of *Conferences* could interrogate the most intelligent of their hearers on the subjects treated by them and ask them how much they understood of what was said; I am quite sure they would feel humiliated and have a concrete proof of the inutility of their labors, and that even in cities, where education is more generally diffused and where it is thought *Conferences* are needed. But if *Conferences* were only profitless the harm would not be so great; I think, and I believe that in so thinking I make no mistake, that they are, oftener than is imagined, productive of much harm and of many dangers.

Conferences are easily misunderstood by the people. They will readily understand the difficulties proposed, but they will not equally well understand, rather they will misunderstand, the answers to them. Not accustomed to reason closely, possessing very little inclination to reason at all, and ignorant of history, they will be conscious of difficulties and doubts rising in their minds which they never thought

of before, which will greatly distress them, and of which they will not know how to rid themselves. And it may be that while the speaker is trying to close and heal wounds that never existed in their minds, he will, without willing it or being conscious of it, open deeper and more serious ones, and God grant that they may not be incurable. As children are happily ignorant of certain passions and of certain kinds of depravity, so are these good people ignorant of certain difficulties and perverse maxims, which would be a severe trial to their faith. Wise parents and teachers are carefully on their guard against enlightening, until the proper time comes, the virgin ignorance of children; and sacred orators ought to be equally on their guard against disturbing the tranquil faith of a believing people by thoughtless and dangerous discussions. Any one who has had dealings with all classes of people knows by experience how readily they mistake one thing for another, the difficulty for its solution, the false for the true, and the appearance for the reality. It is, then, a sacred duty not to put snares in their path and not to require of them what is above their capacity. The people and especially those in country towns and villages are children, and as such they are prone to believe, and ought to believe rather than reason. Put the truth before them in clear and precise

language, tell them it comes from God, and they will accept and welcome it. The people are led very much more easily by the golden thread of authority and faith, than by the iron thread of human knowledge.

Note how Jesus Christ does. He, the Everlasting Pattern, proposes truths, the most difficult to believe and practise, with a simplicity which will be ever the marvel and the despair of the learned; He does not employ human arguments, or at most only a similitude to represent the truth more clearly and to make it more vivid. He says: "This doctrine comes down from on high, from My Father, and you must believe it if you will be saved." He does not discuss with the people, or if at all only rarely and then in the fewest possible words; He does discuss with the Pharisees and Scribes because they were capable of carrying on a discussion. Let us imitate Him.

It will be said: Our people in these days no longer live in happy ignorance of error; day by day they hear and read the utterances and maxims of the irreligious and the impious; is it not our duty to enlighten them, utterly to remove from them doubt and error, if perchance these have entered their minds, and to teach them what to say in reply?

All this will be accomplished more readily and more efficiently by giving them a knowl-

edge of truth in a positive way, rather than by polemical methods, by proposing and answering difficulties, thus leading them into a labyrinth from which they will never be able to extricate themselves. Urge upon them the necessity of remaining steadfast in their faith, of not listening to those who assail it, of resisting and casting out doubt, of fleeing from danger, and of commending themselves to God; in this way the desired end will be more easily and speedily gained.

Moreover, it is to be borne in mind that not every one can give really solid and useful *Conferences,* but only those, and they are few, who have made good and thorough studies, who are really learned and have a practical knowledge of society. To treat thoroughly of revealed Catholic dogma and morality; to show forth their beauties; to know the objections to them and to know how to propose and solve them clearly and briefly, so as to persuade the hearers and dissipate their doubts; to discuss before the people the most intricate questions of the day; to unmask error, which is frequently presented under the appearance of truth; and to do all this in an hour by reasoning with persons, the bulk of whom have no education and little or no knowledge of the matter in hand, is a task, not only in the highest degree arduous, but demanding great talent, long study, and a

complete mastery of the subject. Now, I say frankly that there are very few priests who have the talent, or the will and the time to make such studies; who have a thorough knowledge of theology, philosophy, and history; and who possess that vast fund of information, necessarily required in the field of religious polemics and without which it is worse than rash to enter the arena. And yet in these days there is scarcely a preacher of a Triduum or of a Novena who does not throw what he has to say into the form of a *Conference* after the style of the great French orators. It is enough to make one laugh, if it did not excite compassion and move to anger. It has often been my good or bad fortune to listen to speakers, men, too, above the ordinary and of some reputation, giving *Conferences* on *Liberty,* on *Progress,* on the *Church,* on *Labor,* on the *Social Question,* on *Confession,* on the *Divinity of Jesus Christ,* on the *Immortality of the Soul,* and on similar subjects. But as for arguments they were beggarly! What a confusion of ideas! How inaccurate the statements of doctrine! How many gratuitous assertions! At times it seemed that the speakers did not themselves know even the terms of the subjects they were treating; that they did not know even what they were talking about; and I am sure that ordinarily instructed persons, after listen-

ing to them, must have left the Church disgusted, and fully persuaded of the truth of the contrary of that which the orators were trying to demonstrate; and that the plain people were stupefied and fed on wind. I can not sufficiently commend to orators, who will insist on giving *Conferences,* the precept of Horace, namely, that they should ponder the matter well, measure their strength, and realize what their shoulders can or can not bear, lest they labor in vain, consume the people's time, and, what is still worse, expose to ridicule the word of God and the religion of which they profess to be the champions. Moreover, educated men and unbelievers, on hearing the truths of religion so poorly and feebly demonstrated, attribute to religion itself the defects of the speaker and become firmly convinced that it can not be defended by proofs from reason, and that ignorance is its only stay and support.

And here is another observation with regard to the use of *Conferences* that should not be overlooked. St. Paul tells us that faith is the substance, or the basis and support of *things that are not seen,* or in other words, it is the *why* or the *reason* that we accept them, though we do not comprehend them.[1] Hence it follows that faith of its very nature cares little for discussion; once it is quite certain that he

[1] Heb. xi. 7.

who speaks, speaks in the name of God, it asks no more; it listens and believes. Faith makes its appeal to divine authority, not to human arguments. These may be made use of in dealing with infidels and unbelievers, but only with a view of removing the obstacles that block the way to faith, just as the physician employs remedies to clear the body of humors that are injurious to health, or as the farmer closes up drains that prevent the water from overflowing and irrigating the fields. Now it will be observed that *Conferences* imply discussion and put the giver of the *Conference* and his hearers on the ground of reason and reason alone.

Now, when one sets about giving a *Conference* he virtually and by the very fact says to his hearers: "I am here to demonstrate to you the truth of what I say, and to demonstrate it to you by reason alone; here I am your equal, not your superior; I shall make use of your own arms; I shall not speak to you in God's name, but in the name of reason; I do not call upon you to believe, but to discuss and to reason." If all your hearers, or even the greater part of them, were skeptics or unbelievers, I should have nothing to say against this method, but ordinarily there will be very few of these, possibly one in thirty. And if so, is it not labor lost to proceed in this

way? Is it not to sacrifice the great majority to an imperceptible minority? At first sight it may seem that this method of dealing with an audience will conciliate their good will and dispose them to welcome the truth, but this is an illusion. To flatter self-love, to caress pride, to inflate the vanity of the semi-educated and presumptuous, or, still, worse, of the vulgar-ignorant, can rarely, if at all, be of any service to truth. This can not be brought home to hearers and can be but feebly defended by appeals to the passions, by tacit and impossible compromises, and by half-lies; darkness is not an ally of light. The sick should be treated with all charity and they should get their medicine when necessary, but to lead them to believe that they are the peers of the physician and to enter into discussion with them would be at once foolish and fatal. A teacher is always a teacher, and a disciple is always a disciple; to change places would be contrary to nature. A father may and ought to deal kindly and tenderly with his children, even at times closing his eyes to their shortcomings; this is as it should be, and Jesus Christ has left us an example of it; but for a father to forget that he is a father and to treat his children as equals would be nothing less than harmful to them. So also a sacred orator while speaking in Church in God's name and as a representative

of Jesus Christ, and therefore *as one having authority,* should never forget that he is a teacher and a father. This quality of representative of Jesus Christ, which belongs to a sacred minister, gives both force and prestige to him as a speaker, and these he would forfeit by coming down to the level of his hearers and reasoning with them as peer with peer. The practice of reasoning and discussing, of demonstrating and defending the truths of faith, and of repelling the assaults of its enemies, is commendable and very useful outside the Church, in an academical conference, in a private gathering, in friendly conversation, or in the classroom, but it will be productive of no possible good in Church, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and before a congregation all or nearly all of whom are believers. A wise captain never surrenders an advantageous position to an enemy, so also neither should the sacred orator even by implication abandon the ground of divine authority, which is really his, and which his hearers unconsciously concede to him. We should never forget the words of the Apostle: "My speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom." [1] In the Church we priests are ever the ambassadors and ministers of Christ and it is never becom-

[1] I Cor. ii. 4.

ing in us to lay aside His vesture and clothe ourselves with the gown of the advocate, or the mantle of the philosopher, or the garb of the learned man of the world.

There is one truth especially which we should keep constantly in view, namely, that among our hearers there may be some indifferent, or even unbelievers, but that those who are really such from conviction are very few indeed. They have all been baptized and, whether they will or not, they have its character stamped on their soul, and no human power can efface it; and hence, though they may not advert to the fact, faith has still its roots in their soul. There is ever and necessarily a mysterious affinity between reason and the truths of nature by which reason is gently, but irresistibly attracted toward these as toward its proper object.

Unbelievers at times say they have no faith, and they even parade their incredulity; but it costs them an effort; it is an abnormal state; they do violence to themselves, they live and wish to live under an illusion. Let truth be set before them clearly, precisely, in all its native beauty and simplicity, and they will feel the old memories being new-born in the depths of their soul; the truths of the Catechism will come back to them, and they will find in some folding of the heart vestiges of the Faith which

they had believed was cast out forever. As a man, no matter how brutalized he may be, can never wholly extinguish the noble aspirations of his nature, so neither can a man, once he has been a Christian, ever wholly cease to be a Christian. To gain these poor souls, to kindle in them the spark of the old faith, long and labored discussions are not necessary; it is only necessary to recall to their minds forgotten and rejected truth, to present it to them in its simplicity, in which it is always most effective, with love and unction, and you will see that it will find a way to their heart; truth properly set forth has a superhuman force and is more powerful and persuasive than all the ponderous arguments of science.

I have frequently seen a meadow all parched with the summer sun, and search as I might I could not discover a single living blade of grass; everything seemed burned up and dead. A gentle shower fell; I passed that way again and the entire meadow was fresh and green. This is an image of those souls over which the burning breath of unbelief seems to have passed; a sermon, a single truth of faith that makes its way into their minds, sometimes an edifying deed, a misfortune, a chance remark, is enough to stir them, convert and transform them. Those at all familiar with the mysteries of grace and of the human heart know that it

is not rare to see human souls, all covered over with the leprosy of shameless sins, impious souls, and the most confirmed unbelievers, converted by the prayers or the admonitions of a daughter or of a pious and religious wife, or by witnessing the sacrifices of some good Sister discharging her duties in a hospital, or by the sermon of a poor country priest. We place far more reliance on the power of truth itself, and on the efficacy of grace by which God always accompanies our preaching, than on the subtleties of our scientific arguments, or the art with which we elaborate our discourses. More humility of heart, more simplicity of speech, more earnest prayer, more trust in God, and less noise and parade of human eloquence and worldly knowledge, and we shall find it much more easy to subdue and gain souls.

Possibly there never was so much preaching as at the present time, at least among us. And what is the fruit of it all? Let my readers tell me; certainly it is not in proportion to the lavishness with which the word of God is dispensed. With all this apologetic preaching, what an amount of ignorance! What prejudices! What practical unbelief! True, the cause is chiefly to be sought in men themselves, who either do not listen to the word of God at all, or listen to it with improper disposi-

tions; still I will venture to say that a part, and a considerable part, of the fault lies with us priests and preachers. We preach a great deal, but, if you will pardon the word, our preaching is too much *humanized;* we are at too great pains to please the worldly, to follow the fashions of the hour, to treat of subjects largely if not wholly profane, neglecting those supplied us by the Gospel and proper to it. There is a desire to make a display of human knowledge, to amaze and astound the audience by the artifices of rhetoric, by feats of memory, by an interminable list of names, by quotations from authors of all sorts, by newspaper eloquence, by descriptions that are out of place, by allusions that tickle and excite the unwholesome curiosity of the people, by a vertiginously rapid declamation (flayed of old by Jerome), by theatrical postures, by noise and shouting that torment and split the ears of the auditors. My! I never can bring myself to believe or fancy that the apostles, that St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and St. Ambrose, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Gregory the Great, and the other great orators and saints, ever preached in that fashion, nor do I believe that if they came back to earth they would adopt that style.

And since I have set myself to treat of this thorny subject, you will pardon me if I touch

upon some other points, or defects, of the preaching of our day. Since the use or abuse of *Conferences* has been introduced preachers have come to a pass that they no longer treat of the great and fundamental truths of Faith; they preach through a whole Advent or a whole Lent without once speaking of the end of man, of sin and death, of judgment and hell; nay, it would seem that they are ashamed even to mention these truths. And yet these are our old weapons, yes old, but strong and formidable and secure against every trial and assault, weapons which we should hold aloft and use, no matter what the world may say about it, or what certain men may think of it—men *who would pervert the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*[1]

Many sacred orators, and especially those who are reputed the best, not only say nothing of the fundamental truths of Faith that I have mentioned; they do not even say anything, or very little, of Jesus Christ, or of the virtues proper to a Christian, or of the vices opposed to these virtues. In the course of a whole Lent they will give two or three *Conferences* on Jesus Christ, on His *divinity,* on His *morality,* and the like, but they say nothing, or next to nothing, of His life, of the example He has left us, of His virtues, in a word of the necessity of modeling our life upon His. Is this to con-

[1] Gal. i. 7.

tinue the preaching of St. Paul who protested: "I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified"?[1] And then to reflect how much the people, aye and those not of the laity, need to have a knowledge of the life of Jesus Christ brought home to them and be made to feel and realize that in this knowledge they will find their supremest comfort!

And when are the Christian virtues of humility, obedience, patience, modesty, mortification, faith, hope, and charity, or the opposite vices ever spoken of? If at times they are treated of, instead of the teaching of the Church being explained in clear and popular language, only exclamations, invectives, and vulgarities are indulged in.

Then there is the Month of May, a beautiful and delightful devotion, which has now fortunately become universal. In many city churches devotions are held as in Lent and preachers, it may be of name, are invited to speak. What is ordinarily the character of their preaching? Just as in Lent, neither more nor less; *Conferences* and *Conferences* on the usual subjects, including *Dueling* and *Divorce.* It is painful to think of it; in the prominent churches of the cities the Month of May is los-

[1] I Cor. ii. 2.

ing its distinctive character, so dear to the people, and taking on the austere character of Lent, with what advantage to souls no one knows, at least, not I. We were accustomed during the Month of May to have a short exhortation or instruction on the principal truths of faith and morals; then followed an edifying example, and a practice for the day; finally there were some hymns, and always the solemn singing of the Litanies by the people. Now we are obliged to listen to preachments and heavy *Conferences* of an hour in length in which naturally the people find neither edification nor interest.

Now by such preachments, and, worse still, by such *Conferences,* on theoretical, general, and scientific subjects, thrown into the form of declamations, in language and style rhetorical, journalistic, and artificially stilted, that embrace all things and everything and grasp little or nothing, what do we accomplish? What effects do we produce? Chiefly two, and both most damaging.

First of all we do not instruct the people; we bewilder and intoxicate them. We keep them in ignorance of the most important subjects; and what is worse we lead them to believe that they have knowledge to spare. Wonderful indeed! These poor people do not know the necessary truths of Faith, and quite fre-

quently they are ignorant of the essential things of the Creed, the Commandments, and the Sacraments, and we keep dinning *Conferences* into their ears on subjects of absolutely no importance to them, and nearly always unintelligible. I believe I state only the naked truth when I say that the use of *Conferences* in our cities is one of the causes of the ignorance of the people with regard to the truths of religion. Fewer *Conferences,* and more *Catechism* and moral *Discourses* prepared and delivered as they should be!

The second effect of *Conferences,* if I mistake not, is to destroy in the people a taste for the word of God. What happens in so many other things, happens also in this. The people by very dint of hearing *Conferences* in church and from the seat of truth little by little come to be persuaded that this is really the right way to dispense the word of God; and they are all the more easily persuaded, because this sort of preaching flatters their vanity, is as it were the mode of the day, exercises a seductive influence over them, and as a rule leaves their minds perfectly tranquil as to their moral conduct and excites neither fear nor remorse of conscience. And what is the result? The people, especially upon solemn occasions and in certain parishes, wishing to make themselves important and to be abreast of the times, cry

out for *Conferences* and for preachers who take care to have themselves well advertised. If perchance they have a preacher who sets forth the great eternal truths, treats of moral subjects, and explains the Gospel of Jesus Christ thoroughly and solidly, they give him a name, call him a tiresome preacher of the old school, who talks his audience to sleep. They are like the babe, of whom Dante speaks, who though dying of hunger thrusts the nurse away.

In this way has the taste of the people been vitiated, and is still being vitiated. They prefer the light and empty preaching of *Conferences* to the solid preaching of the Gospel. And this false taste in the preaching of the word of God, the natural result of an excessive use of *Conferences,* is unfortunately causing many more serious evils. Priests, especially the younger ones, seeing the preachers of *Conferences* gain fame and fortune and called to fill the first pulpits, throw aside the apostolic method of preaching, run after novelties, and they too take to preaching *Conferences,* thus spreading and perpetuating the evil. In this way have preachers vitiated the Christian taste of the people; and the people, once their taste has been corrupted, exert an influence upon preachers, and morally force them to continue in the same evil way.

In the sixteenth century, as every one knows,

Christian preachers indulged in conceits, forms of expressions and images so ludicrous that to us of this age they seem simply impossible, and we can not understand how this kind of delirium got possession of all Italy. Only he was reputed a great orator who went beyond the uttermost bounds of extravagance. There was a rivalry in inventing new ideas, phrases, and similitudes, the one more daring and ludicrous than the other, and hence in our literature there remains to us the word *secentista,* meaning something whimsical, incongruous, and in bad taste. When we wish to read something amusing and diverting we take down a volume of one of those orators, who seem to us to have been only mountebanks, merry-andrews, and fools. I should not wish to see a return of anything of this kind in our Christian society, or to have our taste for sacred oratory spoiled by the excessive use of *Conferences,* or to have it lowered to the level of an academical exercise, or to have the Gospel and the Fathers forsaken to give place to newspaper oratory and the fashions of the age. I may be charged with exaggerating and with purposely laying on the colors too heavily; I do not think I do either, and even if I do exaggerate and color too highly it means that at bottom there is still a great deal of truth in what I say; and would that there were not.

I ask my kind readers to bear with me while I touch upon another defect in preaching, intimately connected with the abuse of *Conferences.* Christian preaching naturally embraces the two great fields of the Church's teaching, the truths to be believed and the truths to be practised, *dogma* and *morals,* the *Creed* and the *Commandments.* The *dogmatic* part, or that which regards *principles,* of its very nature holds the first place, because it is the foundation. As long as *principles* are safe, we hold in our hands the line that will guide us securely, we have the foundation on which to build; once principles are lost, everything is lost, and it is not even possible to do what is right. If there is no *dogma* then neither can there be any *morality;* and where there is no *Creed* it is useless to talk about *Commandments.* But if the *Creed,* or *theoretical* divine *truth,* holds the first place, it follows that the *Commandments* must be held to be something accessory; both are *absolutely* necessary; they are related to each other as is the seed to the fruit; the *Creed* precedes, the *Commandments* follow. As a rule in *Conferences* the *Creed* and *principles* will be treated rather than *morals* and the *Commandments;* this is required by the very nature of things. As a natural consequence of this very little, in fact too little, will be said of *morals* and the *Commandments;*

preachers will roam through the regions of theoretical truth and will rarely descend to the practical, to the great detriment of the plain people, who form the great majority of their audiences, and who love the practical rather than the theoretical, because they understand it better and appreciate its importance.

I shall never forget this great truth, which I had from the mouth of a grand and holy old missionary, who for fifty years went through the cities and towns evangelizing the people, receiving as a reward only his daily bread and the expenses of his journey, and gathering in everywhere abundant harvests of conversions. When he was close upon eighty years of age, and I thirty, speaking with an accent of deep conviction, which is always eloquent, he said to me: "Never forget to speak of the *Commandments* rather than of the *Creed;* it costs little to believe, but what does cost is to do. Evil has its abode in the passions; they rise in revolt against the *Creed* only because they do not wish to hear anything of the *Commandments.* There are very few who do not believe; as a rule they say they do not believe, but in their hearts they do believe; on the contrary, there are many, very many who do not keep the *Commandments* and do not wish to keep them. Get them to keep the *Commandments,* and you will see that faith will come back to their souls

without effort. It is the corruption of the heart, that is, a bad life, that clouds the mind and obscures faith; let us, then, cleanse and purify the heart by getting men to keep the *Commandments,* and we shall cause faith to be born anew in the souls of those who seemed incredulous, but who in matter of fact were only depraved." These words have remained fixed in my memory; at that time they seemed exaggerated; now I find them to be quite true and the result of an intimate and practical knowledge of the human heart; I wish that sacred orators would duly meditate upon them, and if they do they will find that they will convert more by smiting vice and showing the beauty of virtue, that is, by preaching on the Commandments, than by declaiming *Conferences* on the *Triumph of the Church,* on *Modern Civilization,* on *Liberty,* and on other like subjects.

It is a saying of Machiavelli, or rather a principle derived from the very nature of things, that institutions are preserved and perpetuated by the same means by which they were established, and that they are reformed and rejuvenated by bringing them back to their origin. Now how was Christianity established? How was the Church founded and how did faith spread and flourish from the beginning? Simply and solely by the preaching of

the Gospel, by setting the divine truths before the Gentiles in their native beauty, without any pomp of eloquence or parade of learning; the world was converted by the teaching of the Catechism. I do not deny that miracles may have been an aid, and also the *Conferences* and Apologies of the Fathers, some of which have come down to us; but I believe I make no mistake in affirming that *Conferences* and Apologies, nay, even miracles, had only a secondary part in that great work. How are the heathen and savage converted in our own day? By the Catechism, and by the miracles of charity wrought by our missionaries, that is, simply by announcing the truths of Faith, which are proved more effectively by the power and efficacy of works, namely, by keeping the *Commandments,* than by arguments and reasoning.

But it will be said: Would you, then, banish *Conferences* altogether from the Church? Would you bring back preaching to the simplicity of the apostles, and to the Catechism alone? If so you would have no one to listen to the word of God; the educated would stay away from the Church and you would have gathered under the pulpit only a few children and a few pious women.

No, I would not wholly banish *Conferences;* even in our day they serve a purpose in the Church. No, I would not reduce preaching to

apostolic simplicity, in the sense that eloquence is to be despised, the aids of art and science rejected, and the Catechism alone used. In doing so I should condemn the great Fathers of the Church, such as St. Augustine, St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Leo, St. Bernard, and a host of others; and also those great luminaries of the sacred pulpit, Bossuet, Massillon, and Segneri, and those other splendid apologists of Notre Dame, Paris, even down to Monsabré, whose works I have myself translated. If my words could bear this interpretation, I should not only make myself ridiculous, I should, moreover, merit severe blame and condemnation.

In what I have said of *Conferences* my purpose has been, if possible, to put the younger clergy on their guard against the abuse that has been, and is still, made of them. I would wish that *Conferences* might be rare and restricted to great cities; that they might be still more rare in the smaller cities of the provinces, where they should be confined to the cathedral, or on feast-days to a few churches having special claims to distinction and frequented by the educated classes; and that in country towns they might not be given at all, or at most tolerated, if there should be a special need for them and if the people are sufficiently well educated to understand this kind of preaching.

Nor is this all; I would wish that *Conferences* might be given only by that limited number of sacred orators, who have talent and have made studies in keeping with the subjects they wish to treat; for unfortunately we frequently hear speakers giving *Conferences* whose intellectual gifts are so poor and whose information is so defective and inaccurate that one in listening to them must blush for very shame. Let him, therefore, who wishes to engage in this work, one difficult enough at best, measure his strength, study to get to the very bottom of his subject, determine its proportions, strive to prove his thesis by solid arguments, and make what he has to say accessible to the intelligence of his hearers. No foliage, no useless digressions, no invectives, no vain parade of vulgar erudition, no newspaper quotations, no commonplaces, no shelf-worn rhetorical declamations, but clear and solid reasoning, a simple and correct literary style, respectful and dignified, all tending to dissipate error and to make truth luminous.

We should not mistake a *Conference* or a discourse for a work on religious polemics. Any one desirous of studying the fundamentals of religion, of weighing its proofs and seeing the solution of the difficulties that are brought against it, must not fancy that this can be accomplished in one or more *Conferences*; let him

consult one of the many works we have on the philosophy of religion and he will there find what he wishes and what will serve his purpose.

I know indeed that the breath of doubt and unbelief is spreading among the inhabitants of cities and of larger towns; and even among the country people certain prejudices and errors have been widely diffused by means of books, newspapers, and lectures; and I know, too, that it is necessary to put these people on their guard against the errors that are being spread among them; but to do so set *Conferences* are neither necessary nor useful; brief and reasonable admonitions suitable to the time, place, and particular circumstances of the audience will suffice. Touch upon the worst and the most serious errors that are being spread abroad; dismiss them with a few pointed observations made in all kindness without any show of temper or contempt; speak in a conversational tone; if possible excite a little merriment and strive to smite the error without giving offence to individuals; but above all things be brief and clear; and in this way more will be accomplished than by long and tiresome *Conferences*. We should never forget that the plain people reason very little, because they are not able to reason. Let us try

to make the truth clear to them in a few words, to illustrate it by an apt similitude, to impress it upon their minds by a happy phrase or a witty remark, provided of course this latter is one becoming the place and the occasion, and let us leave long dissertations aside.

The novel is loved and sought for even in preaching; very well, let us go back to the old models and we shall be novel, so far and so universally have we strayed from them.

One of the purposes, and not the least, I had in view in writing my *Series of Homilies* was and is to bring back this kind of preaching to the ancient pattern, such as we find it in the Fathers. The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, of St. Augustine and St. Bernard, not to mention others, are commentaries on the Sacred Books, in which dogma and morals are woven together with admirable art, and the errors of their age touched upon and refuted as the occasion arose. Those Homilies, it may be said, have the merit of having been novel at their time. In as far as my poor abilities permitted I endeavored to imitate them, taking always for my secure groundwork the Sacred Text. In this way we have as a foundation the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ Himself, which has ever been the same in all past ages and will be for all ages to come; the develop-

ment of it, of course, will be various, according to place and time and the people to whom we speak.

This method has another advantage especially for the clergy, since they will be forced to study the Sacred Books a little more than they have been accustomed to do. St. Jerome said that Holy Scripture ought to be in the hands of the clergy by day and by night so that in falling to sleep their face might rest on its pages. The plain people, in whose heart the Faith is ever living, rejoice to listen to the words of Holy Scripture; they have a natural liking for it, and they understand, when it is explained to them, that they are listening to the teachings, not of man, but of God. In ages past the laity read the Sacred Books; in our day it would be a novel sight to see a copy of them in their hands; let them at least listen to some passages of them read and explained by the pastor or by some other priest. To quote the Sacred Text in Latin is I think both useless and tiresome; still I have done so here and there, first, because the Latin is so easy that the people can partially understand it, and next because they feel, when they hear the Latin, that they are really listening to the word of God.

I have said these things because I, at least, am convinced that they are useful both to the

clergy and to the people. Will they be so in fact? If so, I shall thank God. To some they may seem hardly necessary and not quite true. Be it so; my own conscience bears me witness that I have said frankly what I feel, and that suffices for me. Farewell.

Cremona, August 25, 1892.

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NEW SERIES OF HOMILIES FOR THE WHOLE YEAR

HOMILY I

Mass of One Martyr-Bishop

Statuit ei, etc.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him. Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God; for God is not a tempter of evils, and He tempteth no man. But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured. Then when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; but sin, when it is completed, begetteth death. Do not err, therefore, my dearest brethren. Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration. For of His own will hath He begotten us by the word of truth, that we might be some beginning of His creature.—*James* i. 12–18.

THIS short passage, read in the Epistle of the Mass of this day, is taken from the first chapter of the Epistle of the Apostle St. James the Less,[1] cousin german of Our Lord and Bishop of Jerusalem, who crowned his life by a glorious martyrdom in the sixty-fourth year of our era, being condemned to death by Annas, the father-in-law of Caiphas, before whom our Saviour was led to have sentence passed upon Him.

This letter was addressed to the converted Jews and its purpose was to encourage them to be strong and patient in the midst of the afflictions and vexations with which they were harassed by their brother Jews, who still remained obstinate in their Hebraism.

It is also thought, and seemingly with reason, that St. James in this Letter set himself to correct an erroneous interpretation that had been put by some upon the words of St. Paul with regard to the doctrine of justification. It seemed to these that St. Paul taught that good works are not necessary to salvation, faith being sufficient. In this Letter St. James over and over again insists that works are necessary to keep faith alive and that without them it would be dead.

[1] This St. James is called *The Less* to distinguish him from James, the brother of John, and one of the three specially loved by Christ, who was beheaded by order of Herod in the year 42 of the present era.

Our apostle exhorts the faithful Christians to be resigned in their sufferings, and to this end to exercise patience, the queen of virtues. He bids those who understand not this teaching to ask wisdom of God, to ask it confidently, and by doing so he tells them they will obtain it and thus get a knowledge of his meaning. "Let Christians," he says, "who are poor and lowly glory in their exaltation, and let the rich humble themselves in the emptiness of their wealth, which will very soon fade away and disappear as do the flowers of the field under the burning rays of the sun."[1] And here begins the reading to which you have listened and which I will now set about explaining.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." The temptation of which the apostle here speaks is undoubtedly to be taken in a wide sense, as meaning the persecutions to which the Christians were then subjected and any other incitement to evil, whether coming from without, that is, from the devil and the world, or from within, that is, from the flesh and the passions, as the apostle goes on to explain.

But what is this the apostle says: *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation"?* Blessed is he who is persecuted, buffeted by the devil,

[1] I. 1–12.

seduced and tempted by the world, harassed and tormented by concupiscence? We should say rather that such a one is *unhappy,* certainly not *happy.*

Such language was assuredly contrary to the language of the world of that day, as it is contrary to the language of the world of this day. The world calls them not *happy,* but *unhappy,* who for any reason suffer, whether in person, honor, or goods. But the language of St. James is the language of Jesus Christ Himself who says: "Blessed are the poor, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake, blessed are they that are persecuted and reviled for My name's sake;" and the language of Jesus Christ is the language of truth. But how can he be happy who endures temptation and suffers, aye, often suffers terribly?

St. James answers: "*For when he has been proved, he shall receive the crown of life.*" Do you understand, my friends? The apostle says that in order to be happy it is not enough to be tempted and to be put to the test; we must also stand firm, that is, we must not yield, but on the contrary resist and overcome the temptation, no matter whence it comes, for it is not the soldier who only fights, who gains honor and glory, but he who comes off victorious. Our trials, my friends, though fre-

quently sharp and bitter, are not to be compared to those which men of the world often voluntarily endure to gratify some whim or caprice, to gain some prize or empty honor. Historians tell us that on a certain solemn day of the year the Spartan youths permitted themselves to be scourged with rods at the altar of Diana, vying with one another as to who should longer endure this punishment. They received countless lashes, inflicted without mercy, on their naked breasts and shoulders, the flesh was black and blue, the lacerated skin hung from them in shreds and was carried hither and thither by the scourges, the blood spurted from all parts of their bodies, their nerves and bones were laid bare, their faces were blanched and they fell half dead in a pool of their own blood, but they uttered not a cry or a groan, and gave no sign of surrender. And why all this punishment? Why all this atrocious torment? Solely that they might have the honor and glory of appearing to their fellow countrymen as the bravest of the brave and of having their names upon the tongue of every Greek. Such was the power which the breath of empty praise and the desire of a fleeting glory exercised over those youths. Even though our trials be many and grievous, and the temptations that come to us from the world or from the devil, from the wicked or from our own

passions, be painful, vexatious, and persistent, they can not be compared with the afflictions to which those pagan youths voluntarily subjected themselves. And they endured all this for glory, for an earthly crown, if perchance they were fortunate enough to gain it, and which in any event must perish with death, while we, if we overcome, shall obtain the "crown of life": *He shall receive the crown of life.* Ours will be an immortal and blessed crown, which no one can take from us—surely a prize worth contending for. A soldier to gain a reputation for valor and intrepidity, to win a medal of gold or silver, to obtain promotion, will challenge death where the battle rages most fiercely, and will the Christian, upon whom Christ is looking down from on high, to whom He is holding out the crown of life, fear to give battle to his spiritual enemies, will he turn his back upon them and acknowledge himself vanquished? It would be an unspeakable, a craven cowardice. Having our minds, then, illuminated by faith and our eyes fixed upon the crown of life that God *has promised to them that love Him,* let us battle courageously and conquer in the fight.

True, we should love God and make war on vice, even apart from all thought of our own interest, since God ought to be loved for His own sake and vice ought to be hated and

spurned because it is intrinsically repulsive; but we are so constituted that we never lose sight of our own personal good, which we seek in all things, and hence the apostle in this passage, in order to encourage us to bear up under the weight of our afflictions and to prosecute the war against our passions, reminds us of the crown that is prepared for us and of the reward that we shall receive: *He shall receive the crown.* If the beauty of virtue, if the honor and glory of serving God, are not motives sufficiently strong to sustain us in giving battle to the enemy and overcoming him, at least the reward that is promised us and the crown that is laid up for us should be. Heaven, the possession of God, eternal happiness are the fruit of victory, a conquest which only those achieve who fight valiantly and triumph over the enemy.

In saying *Blessed is he that endureth temptation* St. James indicates that test and trial to which every man is subjected in this lower world; he returns to this idea and goes on specifically to enlarge upon it.

The apostle seems to say: "You are tempted and at times fiercely tempted, and you ask: 'Whence comes this temptation? Who is its author?' First of all you should know and hold firmly that, when temptation comes and knocks at the door of your conscience, it

does not come from God, and hence you can never say: 'I am tempted by God.' Bear well in mind that God is not tempted by evil, nor does He tempt any man: *God is not a tempter of evils, and He tempteth no man;* as He is not subject to temptation, so neither does He tempt any one." Let us try to get at the true meaning of these two phrases.

God is goodness and sanctity itself, and hence He can neither will nor do anything that has in it even the shadow of evil. Can there be a trace of darkness in light, or can fire have in it the property of cooling? Light of its very nature can not do other than give light and fire can not do other than give out heat. They can not possibly produce effects contrary to these. This is clear.

God, who is sanctity itself and most perfect, can not be drawn away to evil: *God is not a tempter of evils.* It would seem that at the time of St. James some thought that God is subject to fate and therefore to evil. Be that as it may it is certain that all Gentiles openly professed this absurd and shocking error. If you read the writings of the Gentiles you will find that they admitted a whole tribe of deities, that these were now seduced and again seducers, and that they were all without a single exception guilty of the gravest crimes and transgressions. So degraded had human rea-

son, abandoned to itself, become, that it acknowledged and worshipped as divinities those who, had they been men, could not have escaped the utmost rigors of the law. It may be that St. James was warning the faithful against this error, which was very generally diffused among the Gentiles in the midst of whom they lived, when he told them that God is not tempted by evil: *God is not a tempter of evils.*

But not only is God not subject to temptation, neither does He tempt any one: *He tempteth no man.* As light can not produce darkness, nor heat cold, so neither can God do evil or incite to evil. If I should say to any child here present: "Tell me, my child, can God do evil?" he would at once reply: "No; because to be able to do evil is an imperfection, as to be liable to sickness is an imperfection, and God being perfection itself can, therefore, do no evil." Why, then, was it necessary for St. James to add: *"He tempteth no man"?*

You should know, my dear friends, that among the countless errors that have spread over the earth in the course of centuries is to be numbered also this one, incredible as it may seem: God is the author of evil; He drives some men to commit sin.

This execrable blasphemy was held and taught by not a few heretics during the lifetime

of the apostles and of their immediate successors, and later on, three centuries ago, it was revived by John Calvin, and is at this day professed by many of his disciples. He was bold enough to say that God drives some men to commit sin in order to be able to cast them into hell, and thus show in them His greatness and the might of His justice. Was there ever uttered upon this earth a more shocking blasphemy than this? To make God the author of evil, the author of sin, which He necessarily hates and detests! To make God, who is sanctity itself and justice itself, the author of impiety, to make Him worse than the worst of men! To think that God, who came upon the earth to destroy sin and to expiate it in His own blood, would then drive man to commit sin! But enough of this, my friends; let us not delay longer on a blasphemy so absurd and satanic: *God tempteth no man.*

Some one may say: "Holy Writ tells us that God tempted Abraham, and David, and Israel, and Job, and Tobias, and others. How, then, can St. James say in his Letter that God tempts no man?"

Holy Writ can not contradict itself; the answer is obvious and easy. We must distinguish two kinds of temptation: the tendency of the one is to lead man on to sin and to eternal perdition, and this, according to St. Augustine,

is called the *temptation of seduction;* the purpose of the other is to test virtue, to make it more resplendent and to afford an occasion of merit, and this is called the *temptation of trial* or proof.[1] The devil tempted Eve, he tempts the just, he tempted Christ, in order to lead them to commit sin; this is the first temptation, or the temptation of seduction. A father puts the love of a son to the proof, a master tests the fidelity of a servant, a teacher the ability and application of a pupil, and a general the courage of his soldiers; they do not wish the son, the servant, the pupil, and the soldiers to fail; they wish only to show their good qualities and their virtues, that they may know them, make them known to others and thus have an opportunity to reward them. This is the second kind of temptation, or the *temptation of proof,* and this is not only lawful, but at times good and necessary. In this sense does Holy Writ say that God tempts, and that God tempted Abraham.

Temptation in as much as it is a seduction or an incitement to sin comes not from God; this is a truth manifest both from faith and natural reason; and yet it is true that on this earth there is temptation to wrong-doing, and that it is violent, obstinate, and ubiquitous. If it comes not from God, whence does it come?

1 Lib. ii. De Conf. Evang. c. xxx.

Who is the baleful author? St. James replies: *Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured by it.*

Concupiscence! This is a terrible word, this is our most dangerous and implacable enemy, an enemy that we all bear about within us. This is the force that inclines us to evil, it is the root of all sin. Whence comes this force that makes us desire to rise higher and higher, that makes us so tenacious of our good name, that makes us fancy we are better than others? Whence comes this hidden force that springs out of the very roots of our being; that impels us to pursue wealth, to gratify our appetite, to indulge the filthy pleasures of sense; that impels us to seek the ease and comforts of life, when we should be engaged in useful toil; that causes us to look with envious eye upon a brother and our heart to burn with hatred against him who has, or seems to have, given us offence? In short, whence all these poisonous fruits of sin, if not from that evil tree of our passions, all of which are lodged in the concupiscence? The concupiscence is a seed, which, though in itself but one, develops into stem and branches, into the flowers and fruits that incessantly come forth from it. It is, as St. Ambrose says, a fever that invests our whole being, that produces within us now an intolerable cold and again an intolerable heat,

that makes us loathe food and burn with thirst, that racks the head with pain and enervates our vital forces, and that, if not subdued, will inevitably lead us on to destruction: *Febris nostra libido est.*

And whence comes this concupiscence, which with its blandishments, its seductions, its sensual gratifications lures us on toward sin? God created man just, so that his concupiscence was ever obedient and never rebellious. The first man sinned and lost grace, and by losing grace lost control of concupiscence, and we his children are exposed to its assaults. By Baptism God restores to us the grace that was lost, but it did not seem fitting to Him to restore to us immunity from concupiscence. This was left as a chastisement of the primal sin, it was left to give us an opportunity for the exercise of patience and to afford us an opportunity and a means of gaining merit. In the present condition of things we, being all sons of Adam, must groan and cry out with the Apostle: "*I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind.*" Hence this concupiscence, although part of our nature, is in matter of fact the work of the common enemy, the devil, from whose degrading yoke God has delivered us. The devil and the world are our enemies, but they are outside us, whereas concupiscence is within us, forms part of our be-

ing, and does not quit us for a single instant. The devil and the world, our enemies, could never assail or harm us, had they not in our concupiscence a natural ally which strives to open to them the door of our heart. Through Eve the devil tempted and seduced Adam; through our concupiscence he strives to overcome our will. The devil and the world strive to set our soul on fire with sin, but all their efforts would be in vain did they not find in our concupiscence material ready to take fire. Try to set fire to stone, or iron, or steel and they will not ignite, but set fire to straw or dry wood and they at once burn and burst into a flame. So also with man subject to concupiscence; this, like straw, stubble, or dry wood takes fire and burns when ignited by the fiery darts of the enemy, and together with it the whole soul will be set on fire and burst into a flame, if the fire of concupiscence is not promptly extinguished.

Note, my friends, the two words used by St. James: Man is *drawn away* and *allured* by concupiscence. The nature of concupiscence could not be more strongly or more incisively expressed. The bait draws the fish to the hook, the beauty of the fruit draws Eve to her fall. How does the bait allure the fish, and how does the apple allure Eve? They are allured because the bait and the apple are, or are believed

to be, pleasant to the taste. Pleasure, this is the snare, the cord, by which concupiscence entraps and binds the will of man: *Drawn away and allured.* How few men there are who do not permit themselves to be taken by the bait of pleasure and ensnared by the gratifications of concupiscence!

Is concupiscence in itself sinful? By no means. It is the daughter of sin and if not curbed allures us to sin, but in itself it is not sinful. And so true is this that it abides with us even after Baptism, and the saints themselves, aye, the greatest of them, felt its goads. As wood is not fire, but may become fire if ignited, so concupiscence is not sin, but may be transformed into sin if the will consents to its promptings, as we shall presently see. Let us go on with the commentary.

"When concupiscence hath conceived it bringeth forth sin." To show us the beginnings and the progress of sin, which is ever the birth of concupiscence, St. James compares it to a natural generation. It is of the highest importance to know how sin enters into the heart and to distinguish how and when it makes itself master of it, that we may know when to shut the door against it.

In this struggle between the tempter on the one hand and our will on the other three moments or periods of time should be noted. The

tempter, whether the devil or the world matters little, stirs the concupiscence by holding out to it pleasure under its most seductive forms. This pleasure may be presented under the form of pride or vanity, of wealth or ambition, of food or drink, of sensuality or revenge, or under any other form. On seeing these objects the concupiscence awakened, agitated, set on fire, naturally reaches out toward those things that delight it, longs to taste them, to possess them and to find its satisfaction in them. But as the will is the mistress and queen of every free act, the concupiscence finds it impossible to lay hold on these objects and make them its own without its consent. Then the concupiscence pleads with the will and employs every stratagem to win it over and carry it with it in order thus to be able to gratify its desire and to enjoy a pleasure forbidden by divine law. It leaves nothing untried to shake the firmness and constancy of the will, neither caresses nor blandishments, neither entreaties, threats, nor deceits; it paints the guilty pleasure in the most alluring colors, it clouds the evidence of the law, it drowns, if possible, the cry of conscience.

In this first period, which may be very brief, is there any sin? No, my friends. The enemy is still outside the fortress of the soul, and as it is not in our power to prevent being assailed and tempted, so also in all this tumult of the

concupiscence there is not and can not be sin; the battle is but begun, and it is still uncertain whether the concupiscence will be victorious or vanquished.

But some timid or partially instructed soul will say: "I feel the pleasure, my heart is all in a tumult, and I seem to be whirled away in a tempest of voluptuousness and sin." Fear not, troubled soul; to feel the goad of concupiscence and the pleasure it sets before you is natural and does not depend upon your will; "To desire is natural," says St. John Chrysostom; and St. Gregory the Great tells us that an unclean thought, that knocks at the door of the will, does not defile the soul.[1]

But then what frequently happens? The will flattered, entreated, allured, enticed by a hundred motives, gazes upon the unlawful pleasure that is held out to it, as Eve gazed upon the fatal fruit; it contemplates it, admires it, draws near to it, wavers uncertain for a moment between the stern voice of conscience that rises in protest and the flattering pleadings of concupiscence, and finally says, *Let us taste it,* and then deliberately tastes it. What happens, my friends, in this second period? The will, besieged by the concupiscence, instead of resisting, fighting, and repelling what the concu-

1 Cogitatio immunda nequaquam mentem inquinat, compulsat. Lib. ii. Mov., c. iii.

piscence holds out to it, has bargained and yielded, and opened the gates; concupiscence has entered the fortress; the concupiscence and the will have thrown themselves into each other's arms, have joined in an unclean embrace, have become one; the sin is consummated, and the third period has been brought to a fatal ending.

"*Sin when it is completed begetteth death,*" the death of the soul, quenching in it the divine life of grace, and the death also of the body, at the proper time, for it is the companion of the soul. Eternal death! Appalling misfortune! It begins with concupiscence moving the free will, thence proceeds to culpable embraces between the two, and ends in guilt, in the unfortunate birth of sin, whose mother is concupiscence and whose father is free will.

I shall close with the words of St. Augustine,[1] which fit in admirably with this passage of St. James. "O Christian," he says, "beware; refuse to give thy consent to the concupiscence. Without thy aid this can not conceive sin. Hast thou consented? If so, thou hast conceived in thy heart. Does con-

[1] "Noli consentire concupiscentiae tuae. Non est unde concipiat nisi de te. Consensisti? Quasi concubuisti in corde tuo. Surrexit concupiscentia? Nega te illi: noli eam sequi. Illicita est, lasciva est, turpis est, alienat te a Deo. Noli dare consensionis amplexum, ne plangas partum: quia si consenseris, si amplexatus fueris, concipis." (Hom. xlii.)

cupiscence rise and advance toward thee? Deny thyself to it, refuse to follow it. It is unlawful, it is lascivious, it is degrading, it separates thee from God. Refuse to give it the embrace of consent, if thou wouldst not have sorrow in the birth; for if thou dost consent, if thou dost embrace, thou hast conceived, and conceived sin." [1]

[1] There are still two verses to be explained, but these I omit because they are explained in Homily xxi, Vol. ii, for the fourth Sunday after Easter.

HOMILY II

Mass of One Martyr-Bishop

Statuit *et*, ETC.

IF ANY man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be My disciple. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me, can not be My disciple. For which of you having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down, and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it: Lest, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that see it begin to mock him, saying: This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, about to go to make war against another king, doth not first sit down, and think whether he be able, with ten thousand, to meet him that, with twenty thousand, cometh against him? Or else, whilst the other is yet afar off, sending an embassy, he desireth conditions of peace. So likewise every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, can not be My disciple.—*Luke* xiv. 26–33.

IT IS not easy to say where these words were addressed by Jesus Christ to the apostles and to the multitudes, for on this point the Gospel is silent; still it would appear that He spoke them during His last journey from Galilee to Judea. This being so, it is clear that they were spoken only a few days before His death.

Before beginning the explanation of this passage of the Gospel it is well to note, first, that this discourse was addressed, not alone to the apostles, but also to the multitude; and next, that the few sentences to which you have listened are the marrow and the substance of an instruction of considerable length. And now for the explanation.

"If any man come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he can not be My disciple." In listening to these words we almost feel that we hear our blessed Lord uttering them. What, you will say, can Jesus Christ, who bids us love all men as we love ourselves, who insists that we shall love even our enemies, our persecutors and calumniators, mean that we shall hate those nearest and dearest to us, aye, even our father and mother? This is manifestly contrary to natural reason and contradicts the whole teaching of the Gospel. How, then, are these words, at once weighty and specific, to be understood?

First of all, when there is question of interpreting Holy Writ, we must lay down this principle, in itself obvious and most certain, namely: Does the sense of any Scriptural phrase seem contrary to the certain principles of human reason? If so, say at once that this sense is not the true one and that another must be sought, since the teachings of faith can not possibly be contrary to the certain principles of reason. Holy Writ says that God has eyes and hands and feet. It says that God gets angry, repents, and moves. All this is contrary to what right reason teaches us concerning God, and it is, therefore, necessary to seek another sense of the words, and of course you know what that sense is. So also in the present instance, it is impossible that Jesus Christ should command us to hate any one, and still more is it impossible that He should command us to hate any one bound to us by the sacred ties of blood, and hence this passage of the Gospel must be understood in a different sense, which is the following:

To distinguish between a less ardent and a more ardent attachment the Hebrews called the former hatred and the latter love. Thus when God said: "I have loved Jacob and hated Esau," He meant only to say: "I have loved Jacob more than Esau, for to the former I have given fertile land and to the latter land

arid and sterile." So, Jesus, using the language of the people, says: "Whoso hates not father and mother," etc., meaning: "Whoso loves father and mother more than Me can not be My disciple." And that this and none other is the sense of this passage is clear from St. Matthew, who stating this very identical truth says: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me." [1]

What truth can be more obvious and evident than this? Put God, or Jesus Christ the God-Man, on the one side and on the other father and mother, brothers and sisters, wife and husband, all the things of earth and all riches, and multiply them a hundredfold, and I ask is not God, Jesus Christ, infinitely more worthy of our love? If the alternative were proposed to us to choose between Jesus Christ and the persons most dear to us and all the treasures of the world, to which side should our heart incline? It is hardly necessary to say—of course to that of Jesus Christ. Perish all things else, if it must be, but never let us lose Jesus Christ.

And now for a most important practical consequence of all this. It is quite possible that to avoid offending Jesus Christ and violating His law we may be obliged to displease father or mother, sons or daughters, or others near

[1] x. 37.

to us, but we should not hesitate an instant; we may never offend Jesus Christ or transgress His law even though it costs the friendship of those we most tenderly love.

Let us go on to the next verse, which is intimately connected with that just explained. To live the life of a Christian, to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, frequently calls for terrible sacrifices and may make it necessary for us to part from those whom we most love. What a trial this is for a noble soul! Yet what is to be done? We may not hesitate an instant; Jesus Christ abridges and enforces His teaching in this very simple and very terrifying sentence, which we ought ever to keep before our mind and upon which we ought always to meditate: *"Whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me can not be My disciple."*

The word *cross,* as here used by the Divine Master, does not of course mean a *material* cross, but rather all that burden and accumulation of trials and sufferings, of pains of body and sorrows of soul that go to make up the warp and woof of this present life. Neither genius nor knowledge, neither wealth nor power, nor all the combined forces of men can remove the evils of every sort that weigh upon and molest us; they may alleviate them, they may diminish them, but wholly remove them they never can.

As we all came into this life subject to the heritage of sin and condemned to death, so are we also subject to sorrow and suffering under their various forms. Enter into the hut of the peasant, cross the threshold of the palace of the king, listen at any door, and everywhere you will see tears being shed, everywhere you will hear sighs and moans. The cross is seen rising everywhere, it casts its shadow upon palace and cabin; this is a universal and absolute law, and it is folly to hope to escape from its yoke. Is there any of you, who listen to me, a single one, who has not felt the barb of sorrow, who has not shed bitter tears, and who knows not the cross? If there be such a one let him rise and speak. He would be not only an exceptional man, he would be a miracle.

Since, then, there is absolutely no hope of escaping the cross, let us take it up courageously and generously and bear it after Jesus Christ.

Here I ask you to consider attentively the precept of Jesus Christ, which consists of two distinct parts. First of all He bids each of us to take up our cross; but this is not all, He next bids us to come after Him. We must take up the cross; hence we may not thrust it from us, or revile it, or bear it discontentedly and under compulsion; we must, on the contrary, take it up bravely and, if not joyously, as

did the saints, at least with a tranquil mind and with resignation. We must follow Christ: *Come after Me;* namely, imitate Him, bear the cross as He bore it, in peace, keeping constantly before us the thought that in this especially do we make ourselves like unto Him in time in order thus to be like unto Him for eternity. Whosoever does not bear the cross and come after Jesus Christ can not hope to be His disciple: *Can not be My disciple.* Christ did not say: "Do miracles, be wise, powerful, rich, and then you shall be my disciples;" but He said: "Take up the cross, bear it after Me, and you shall be My disciples."

We should not forget that another Evangelist bids us carry the cross *always,* giving us to understand that at no time can we lay it aside. It is, as St. Ignatius Martyr says, a means by which we may scale heaven and take it by violence.

Now, my friends, let us cast a glance back upon our past lives. We have never been without the cross; we have found it at every step of our journey through life. How have we taken it up, how have we borne it? Patiently and resignedly as did Jesus, or complainingly, striving to flee from it, and it may be blaspheming it? Would you know and measure a virtuous man? Note how he accepts and carries his cross.

Having condensed the whole of the practical teaching of the Gospel into the sentence just explained, Jesus goes on still further to confirm it and, as is His wont, employs a very simple similitude, or rather two of them, which admirably illustrate its truth.

"You of course understand," Jesus seems to say, "the teaching of the cross; to set about carrying it always and as I carried it is quite a difficult undertaking and one that may very well frighten you; I do not wish to conceal anything; the work is severe and terrifying, still we must come to a decision, measure our strength, and not only make a beginning, but go on to the end. *'Which of you having a mind to build a tower doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he hath wherewithal to finish it?'* Any man, if he is not insane, before setting about to erect a large building, or a tower, that is, one for military purposes, before beginning the work will carefully reckon the cost to ascertain if he has money enough to complete it; so also, says Christ, must we do if we will be His disciples. We must think the matter over, measure our strength, and ascertain if we are equal to the test. By this similitude our Saviour only wishes to make us realize how great and difficult the undertaking is, and to put us on our guard against being rash and

presumptuous. Any one, thinking about building a tower and finding that his means are not sufficient for the enterprise, at once dismisses the thought from his mind, lest others, seeing it commenced and abandoned, say in derision: "*This man began to build and was not able to finish.*" A wise man so circumstanced will abandon all idea of building.

But must a Christian do the same? If he feels that he is unequal to the task of treading the narrow way that leads to Heaven, is he to give up the struggle as lost and abandon the work of his own sanctification? Assuredly not, to entertain such a thought, as is clear, would be a blasphemy. But, it will be said, is not this the conclusion to be drawn from the comparison between the man who can not build his tower and him who can not follow Jesus Christ? It would seem so, but it is not. When one finds himself unequal to the building of a tower, he ought at once to give up all thought of it, both because it is not a matter of absolute necessity and because he has not the means necessary to complete it; but when one feels his own weakness in working out his salvation, he should not give up the attempt, first because it is a matter absolutely necessary, and next because he can find a way to secure the means to accomplish it. And what are those means? Let him have recourse to God in prayer, fre-

quent the sacraments, and he will find that what is impossible to his own strength will be, not only possible, but easy. Such is the difference between works impossible to man and the work of our sanctification, which is always possible, nay, easy, with aid from on high, upon which we may always confidently reckon.

True, some see in this tower to be built, a figure not simply of the work of our sanctification, which is necessary to all without distinction, but of the calling to a religious life and to the practice of the Gospel counsels, which we may omit without danger of being lost; but this does not seem to be the true interpretation, first, because Jesus was speaking, not alone to the apostles, but also to the multitude, who certainly were not called to observe the counsels, but only the precepts; and next, because the scope of Christ's discourse was the necessity of following Him in the ordinary way. Hence, since these words of the Divine Teacher refer to all, they are to be understood as referring in a most special way to those who have given themselves to the observance of the counsels.

And why, asks St. John Chrysostom, did Jesus Christ use the similitude of a tower in preference to any other? Because, says the holy Doctor, as one who builds a tower and goes to the top of it can see things better from

that elevation, can freely range with his eyes over the earth and contemplate the heavens, so he, who in a spirit of faith rises above the things of earth, gets a clearer and fuller knowledge of the things of heaven and, fixing his heart upon them, lives in them.[1]

To bring out His thought still more fully and clearly Jesus Christ adds another similitude, very like the first and also taken from the art of war. Having set before us the similitude of a military tower He now sets before us that of an army, saying: *"What king, about to go to make war against another king, doth not first sit down and think, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him, that with twenty thousand cometh against him? Or else, whilst the other is yet afar off, sending an embassy, he desireth conditions of peace."* It is still the same truth that is set forth in this second similitude as in the first, but under another form; namely, that we must realize how important, and yet how difficult, is the task which we set ourselves to accomplish in following Christ, and that we must know ourselves, cease to be presumptuous and humbly ask the aid of Him who alone can and will give it.

It is hardly necessary to remark that the last clause: *"Or else, whilst the other is yet afar off, sending an embassy, he desireth conditions*

[1] Ad Pop. Antioch. Hom. xv.

of peace," is not to be taken literally, for if it were so taken, it would follow that we should bargain with the enemy in the affair of our soul's salvation and accept the conditions that he might see fit to impose, which would be impossible and impious. This clause should be regarded as added simply to embellish the similitude, and it would be childish to attempt to make it fit in with the truth that is being set forth.

And here follows the last sentence which may be considered the consequence of what has been said and the scope of all the words of Christ: *"So, likewise, every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, can not be My disciple."* This teaching is indeed formidable, and absolutely certain, and is practically the basis of that of the entire Gospel. To get at its true meaning it will be necessary to explain the clause somewhat at length. Man has received from God the Creator two most noble faculties through which the activity of the whole soul is exerted and on which depend either his greatness and perfection or his degradation and eternal ruin, namely, intellect and will. The intellect points out the way the soul must tread, the truth toward which it must tend; the will is the power that carries the soul forward to the truth, the hand with which it seizes the truth and makes it its own. Hence while the

perfection of man commences in the intellect it can not be completed except in the will. It is the function of the will to bind the soul by love to the objects the intellect sets before it, and either to make it beautiful with their beauty, or to defile it with their defilement. These objects may be reduced to two great categories, namely, heavenly things and eternal goods, of which God is the exhaustless fountain, and the earthly things and perishable goods of this lower world. The soul, illuminated by faith, ought by the bond of the will or love to bind itself to God, live of Him, for Him, and in Him and become beautiful with His beauty. If, on the contrary, the soul, looking wistfully out upon the things of earth, clings to them inordinately and lovingly unites itself to them, it will be by them and through them soiled and defiled. What, then, is the soul to do? Which is it to choose—Heaven or earth, God or creatures? It should loose itself wholly from all inordinate love of creatures, loving them only as God wills and permits, and concentrating all its love on Him alone. Observe the boatman in his small craft; he holds a rope in his hand ready to fasten his boat to the dock, or if need be to loose it and allow it to run before the wind on the waves of the lake. The Christian should head the boat of his soul for the port and with the cords of love fasten it to God, from whom

no power can separate it. Whosoever will be a disciple of Christ must detach his love from all things of earth, from all that is not God, in order that he may be wholly God's. You belong to what you love. Do you love the world? You are of the world and your lot will be with the world. Do you love God? You will be of God and your lot will be with Him forever. We can not be simultaneously of God and of the world, for it is impossible to serve two masters contrary each to the other. If we are of the world we shall not be of God, and if we are of God we shall not be of the world. This is what Christ teaches us in these weighty words: *"Every one of you, that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, can not be My disciple."*

What, some one will say, must I give up my fields, my possessions, my property, and even myself to be of Jesus Christ? Must I strip myself of everything and leave myself absolutely nothing that I may have the honor of being a disciple of Jesus Christ? This is impossible and would mean the destruction of all society.

There are some few who from love of Jesus Christ really give up everything, who loose themselves from all love of creatures to bind themselves wholly to God; they follow the example of Christ and the apostles and embrace

the counsels of the Gospel. There are generous and happy souls who snap every tie that binds them to earth, who like birds range through the limitless spaces of the heavens and never touch, even with their feet, the dust of earth. Let us admire them.

Do not hope to rise to so dizzy a height and to follow the Master along this path. Still do not lose heart; there is another path by which to follow Christ, and one not only possible, but easy for all. Which is it? Keep your fields and your homes, your goods and your money, and if you like, increase them, multiply them, and become even wealthy; but never love these things of earth more than the things of heaven, or as much, never prefer them to God and His love. Keep them, but never give your heart to them inordinately; keep them, but be ever ready to part with them entirely and absolutely should God require this of you; keep them, but use them only for your real advantage and that of others; keep them, but do not become their slaves, rather make them yours; keep them, but as you do your garments, only so long as they are serviceable to you or to others, ready to strip yourselves of them at God's bidding; keep them, but as the saints kept them, as did David and Job, as did Louis, King of France, Stephen, King of Hungary and Edward, King of England; in the midst of wealth they were

poor in spirit; surrounded by creature comforts and honors, they lived in thought and affection in heaven.

I shall bring this Homily to an end with the words of St. Gregory the Great, which are specially applicable in this place. "If you will not give up all things, so retain them that you may not be tied by them to the world; that you may possess worldly goods and not they you; that you may keep a mastery over them, lest your mind, subdued by a love of the things of earth, be enslaved by them. While using the things of time, desire the things of eternity; employ temporal things on your journey, look forward in advance to things eternal; while gazing casually in passing at what goes on in the world, let the eye of the mind look straight ahead, contemplating attentively the things that will one day be ours." [1]

[1] "Si cuncta mundi relinquere non potestis, sic tenete quae sunt hujus mundi, ut tamen per ea non teneamini in mundo, ut terrena res possideatur, non possideat: ut sub mentis vestrae sit dominio quod habetis, ne, si mens vestra terrenarum rerum amore vincitur, a rebus suis magis ipsa possideatur. Sit ergo res temporalis in usu, aeterna in desiderio: sit res temporalis in itinere, desideretur aeterna in perventione: quasi ex latere respiciatur quidquid hoc mundo agitur: ante nos autem tendant oculi mentis, dum tota intentione illa inspiciunt, ad quae perveniemus."

HOMILY III

Mass of One Martyr-Bishop

Sacerdotes Dei, etc.

BLESSED be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. Who comforteth us in all our tribulation; that we also may be able to comfort them who are in all distress, by the exhortation wherewith we also are exhorted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us: so also by Christ doth our comfort abound. Now whether we be in tribulation, it is for your exhortation and salvation: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation: or whether we be exhorted it is for your exhortation and salvation, which worketh the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer. That our hope for you may be steadfast: knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation.—*2 Cor.* i. 3–7.

THIS passage is taken from the first chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians and follows immediately after the salutation or

address of the Letter. It was written in Macedonia, and likely in Philippi, a year after the first Epistle, when Titus on his return from Corinth made known to him the condition of the Church there and the excellent effect produced by his first Letter. Moved by the good news received from Titus he joyfully opens his heart and begins the Letter in the terms of affection and love to which you have just listened. Let us begin the explanation, which will afford us an opportunity of making a few practical applications of the Apostle's words.

In the first two verses, according to his custom, St. Paul gives the address and expresses his good wishes for the Corinthians. He then begins with this solemn formula: "*Blessed be God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.*" In these words, full of strength and all aflame with love of God, we feel, so to say, the beatings of the Apostle's heart; they are an outpouring of his great soul; they carry his readers with him from the very start, and transport them on the wings of faith and love to the heights of heaven and up to God Himself, the source of all good.[1] *Blessed be God!* It is a cry of praise, admiration, love, and gratitude, a cry

[1] We also find this brilliant and sublime formula, with slight changes, in the beginning of the Letter to the Ephesians, Ch. I, v. 3.

that wells up from a soul filled and penetrated with the greatness of God and of the benefits of which He is ever so lavish in heaven and on earth; and this cry, at once fitting and natural, ought incessantly to leap forth from our hearts and be always upon our tongue, for since the favors we receive from God in both the natural and supernatural order are continuous, so also should our gratitude be continuous: *Blessed be God!*

In Holy Scripture the word *God* sometimes signifies the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or the whole Divine Essence, common to the three Persons, and sometimes one or the other of the three Divine Persons, each of whom is God, wholly God, as we learn from the Catechism. In this clause the word *God* clearly signifies the Father, the First Person of the August Trinity, since St. Paul explicitly adds: "And *Father* of Our Lord Jesus Christ." Here we have the first two Persons of the most Blessed Trinity, the Father and the Son, specifically named; we have also pointed out the distinction between them, since the Father can not be the Son, nor the Son the Father, and further we have their equality established, since the nature of the Father and of the Son must be the same.

St. Paul goes on. Full of faith and his eyes fixed on God, on God the Father, the Father

of Our Lord Jesus Christ, he dwells on the thought suggested by the beautiful word *Father*. Any one in uttering, and bringing home to himself the meaning of the word *Father* must feel his heart enlarged; he realizes that it conveys to him the idea of authority, the primal and most exalted of all authority, it is true, yet an authority gentle, benign, loving, and superlatively beneficent. The idea of *Father* banishes all idea of severity and justice and calls up that of goodness, love, and mercy, and hence he does not say: "Blessed be God and the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of justice," but "the *Father of mercies.*" And why the Father of mercies, and not of mercy? Is mercy manifold? Is it not enough to say that He is the Father of mercy? No, this does not satisfy the Apostle, who, as it were, carried out of himself by the thought of the goodness and mercy shown by God in giving us His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, sees all mercies lodged in Him as in a treasure house: *The Father of mercies.* Mercy sustains and comforts us, for being poor and miserable we all have need of it and in it alone can we place our hope. Hence St. Paul, having said that God is the Father of mercies, adds: *And the God of all comfort.* These are words of life, words of cheer and consolation for us children of sin and sorrow. Never for-

get, my friends, this oracle of St. Paul: "God the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort." These words will sustain and comfort you in the stormy days of this life.

St. Bernard, commenting on this passage, makes an observation at once timely and worthy of being recorded. "Why," asks the saint, "does God call Himself the Father, not of judgment or of vengeance, but of mercies; not the God of power, pain, or suffering, but of all comfort? Because," he answers, "when He is indulgent and merciful, when He consoles us, He acts according to His nature, which is all goodness and charity; when He chastises and afflicts us, He acts contrary to His nature, being forced so to act because of our sins. Hence we may truthfully say that we by our sins constrain God to lay aside His character of Father of mercies and God of all comfort and to take on that of judge and chastiser."[1] This is a stupendous and most consoling truth. God acting of Himself and on the impulse of His nature desires only my salvation, He does not wish to judge or condemn me, He wishes me to be eternally happy with Him; if I am lost, if I

[1] "Recte non Pater judiciorum, vol ultionum dicitur, sed Pater misericordiarum; non modo quod Pater videatur misereri potius, quam indignari . . . sed eo magis quod miserendi causam et originem sumat ex proprio; judicandi vel ulciscendi magis ex nostro (ex peccatis scilicet nostris)." (Serm. V, De natali Domini.)

am condemned and punished by Him, I shall be so only because I have forced Him to condemn and punish me. No earthly father, worthy the name, condemns and punishes his son, if the son by his conduct does not oblige him to do so, and will God, the Father of fathers, act otherwise?

Our God is the God of all comfort and of this, says St. Paul, "I have in my own person seen indubitable proof, for *He comforteth us in all our tribulation.*" Life is a network of flowers and thorns, a mixture of honey and wormwood, an alternation of days of calm and days of storm; God in His wisdom has so disposed things lest we should fall under the burden of our ills and lest we should grow over attached to this place of sojourn. All of us are subject to this alternation of good and evil, of joy and sorrow. This the Apostle declares in the above passages and in many others of his Letters. Let us consider the single words of the text. In it St. Paul states that God comforted him in all his tribulations, which means that he never had a sorrow that was not compensated by some joy. This proves that God never loses sight of His suffering children and that he never permits them to be tried beyond their strength. Hence when any trial or sorrow, any humiliation or misfortune comes upon us let us take comfort in the thought that God will

temper its bitterness by ways and means known to Himself. Let us raise our eyes to Him, throw ourselves with confidence into His fatherly arms and we shall feel at once coursing through the inmost fibers of our heart a quietude of peace, an indescribable sweetness, which the world can not know, and we shall cry out with the Apostle: *"Blessed be God, the Father of comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation."*

The motives which lead God to console us in our afflictions are many, one of which has just been touched upon, namely, that of sustaining us in our afflictions. There is another to which St. Paul refers and which shows how lovingly God watches over the one who suffers. *"Who comforteth us in all our tribulation that we also may be able to comfort them, who are in all distress."* Here the goodness of God is wonderfully apparent and also the delicate and effective action of His providence. As I have said, we all suffer, some more, some less; we all bear about within us a wound, a sorrow of the heart; and we all have need of some friendly hand to soothe our pain. God, if He would, could Himself pour the balm of gladness into the wounds of each of us, but this is not His ordinary way of doing. As a rule He communicates His graces and favors to man through men, through men He communicates His grace

and truth, and everything else, whether in the natural or the supernatural order, in order thus to bind them ever more closely together by the ties of mutual dependence and charity. So also with regard to the comforts and consolations that come from God to us and that through us should be communicated to our fellow-men who groan under a burden of sorrow. God comforts fathers and mothers in their trials, that they may likewise comfort their weeping and suffering sons and daughters, and similarly sons and daughters comfort and console their distressed parents; and so on through all the relations of life. We are all strengthened and comforted by God, that we may in turn dispense to those about us, who are suffering, the balm of solace and thus in a measure soften the bitterness of the trials of this life. Whithersoever we turn our eyes we see our fellow-men suffering; God wishes to comfort them through us; we should all, therefore, become instruments by which He may carry His consolations to all. As God by means of the rich feeds the hungry and clothes the naked, so also by means of us does He wish to comfort those who weep and mourn, and this is surely a noble and a holy charity.

Let us go on to the consideration of the next sentence, which runs thus: *"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also by*

Christ doth our comfort abound." The sufferings of Christ, of which the Apostle here speaks, are our sufferings, borne for Him and in imitation of Him,[1] sufferings that may properly be said to be Christ's, since He is our Head and the sufferings of the members are ascribed to the head. Hence Christ may be truly said to suffer in us, in us to be fed, to be given drink and to be clothed. Did not Jesus Christ Himself say to Saul: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," that is, "in My members and in My Church"? "The sufferings of Christ that we endure," says St. Paul, "are many and great: *They abound in us;* but in the measure of these sufferings are also the consolations that Jesus pours into our hearts: *So also by Christ doth our comfort abound.*" Few men have suffered as did the Apostle; take up the Acts of the Apostles and his Letters, in which are narrated only some and possibly not the half of his sufferings, and you will be able to form some idea of all this wonderful man endured. He was driven from city to city, scourged, stoned, and imprisoned, he was in-

[1] I know that the *sufferings of Christ* mentioned in this passage are held by some to be the sufferings endured by Christ Himself for us and not ours. This interpretation is a good one, but it seems to me ours is better, because St. Paul is here bringing out the fact that his joys are in the measure of his sufferings, and as are his joys, so, it seems to me, ought the sufferings to be that correspond to them.

sulted, calumniated, and reviled by his own countrymen, he lived by the labor of his hands and was finally beheaded by the executioner. So great were his sufferings that, as he tells us himself, he wearied of life and yet he avows that, great as were his sorrows, his joys were equally great, nay the latter surpassed the former: *"I exceedingly abound in joy in all my tribulation."* How great, then, must have been the joy of St. Paul if it surpassed all his sorrows and sufferings!

And whence came the joy which filled this great soul to overflowing? He tells us himself that his sufferings were beyond count and measure, but all the while he was thinking of the reward which was laid up, of the crown which was being prepared for him; of the eternal and perfect felicity, the seeds of which he was sowing with his sufferings; he was thinking that by his griefs he was growing into the likeness of Jesus Christ, his Head and Pattern; that he was enduring all these trials and sufferings for the salvation of his brethren, for the glory of God, for the cause of truth, for the love of his Jesus, and in this thought, in this faith and hope and love he found a divine strength and the purest of joys, joys that flowed in upon his soul and flooded his whole being.

And do we not see something parallel to all this in men of the world? Many of them labor

by day and by night, they toil and endure hunger and thirst, they make long journeys, they are ever on the alert, they defy the inclemency of the seasons, venture into the most deadly climates, put up with insults and revilings, and expose themselves to death itself in the hope of gaining a little glory and of laying up a fortune. How many for the love of a fleeting beauty, for the delight of a few hours, face nameless dangers, humiliations, and sorrows? Put the question to them: "Do you suffer?" They will instantly reply: "Yes, and our sufferings are intense." "And in your sufferings do you experience a certain solace and joy?" "Yes, and a very great one." "In what does this solace, this joy, consist?" "In the hope of gaining the object for which we toil and strive and endure hardships; in the thought that we are suffering for those whom we love and who are dear to us." Very well, then, if men of the world find an assuagement of their sorrows, a compensation for their trials in the hope of a temporal reward, if they feel happy in toiling and enduring for those whom they love, why should not the Christian rejoice in the midst of the struggles and trials of life, endured for a recompense at once certain and eternal, for the pleasure of pleasing God and of being like Jesus Christ?

Listen again to the Apostle, who continues:

"Whether we be in tribulation, it is for your exhortation and salvation, or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation." These are most noble sentiments and wholly in keeping with the life and character of St. Paul. He has said that he experienced many and great afflictions in the exercise of his apostolic ministry and that he was compensated by many and great joys, and why? What was the secret of these feelings which succeeded to each other in his heart? St. Paul was a true apostle of Jesus Christ, he thought not of himself, sought not himself or his own interests, as did others whom he upbraided in his Letters; he was all aflame with zeal for the glory of God and the saving of souls; these and these alone were the objects upon which he kept his mind and set his heart, and hence he cried out: "Bear well in mind, my children, that if I suffer, I suffer that you may be comforted, and attain everlasting life; if I am happy and joyful, it is again because I see you happy and contented and on the road to salvation." What language! What charity! What truly fatherly affection! The Apostle is indifferent whether he suffers or rejoices; to him one is the same as the other; he is ready either to embrace the cross with its sorrows, or to taste the cup of joy provided only he can make happy the Corinthians and aid them in saving their souls.

Behold here a model of perfect charity, behold here how shepherds of souls and all, who are in any way working for the good of others, should act; they should forget themselves, give themselves wholly to the service of their brethren.

St. Paul speaks of the *salvation,* of course the eternal salvation, of his spiritual children; for which, he says, he is ready to endure all things. This idea dominates and pervades his whole thought, and naturally calls up in his mind another idea inseparable from it, namely, that of the means of attaining salvation, the final and supremest good to which man can and ought to aspire. *Eternal salvation,* cries St. Paul. And know ye how it is worked out and attained? "*Which* (salvation) *worketh the enduring of the same sufferings which we all suffer.*" We all wish to secure eternal salvation at no matter what cost; but if we will possess it we must as an indispensable condition be patient and constant in suffering all the trials and tribulations with which the path of this life is strewn. This is a condition for all, but more especially for those who follow Jesus Christ.[1] This brings us again to that great and

[1] In verse 6th I have omitted the words: *Whether we be exhorted, it is for your exhortation,* since, according to the best texts, these have been added, how, is not known, and moreover they are but an unimportant repetition. See *Calmet* on this passage.

very simple truth which contains the marrow and the sap of all the Gospel teaching and which Jesus Christ expresses in these solemn words: "If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross and deny himself and follow Me." To suffer for love of God, to suffer with resignation, impelled and borne up by faith and the hope of the good things to come that are to endure forever, is to tread the royal and safe way that leads to salvation.

The last verse, in which the Apostle speaks both in his own name and in that of Timothy, is still to be explained: *"That our hope for you may be steadfast";* which means that the hope, concerning the good dispositions of the Corinthians, inspired in St. Paul by the favorable reports brought to him by word of mouth by Timothy, was well grounded and firm. And why? Because he adds: *"Knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you also be of the consolations."* He enforces again the same palmary truth, that if and since they suffer as Jesus Christ suffered, they will also share in the joy of the everlasting felicity of Jesus Christ.

As you see, my friends, the Apostle, who faithfully reproduces and re-affirms the teaching of Christ, always promises a reward to him who suffers; still he never once says that this reward is to be sought in the goods and

enjoyments of this world, but only in the goods and enjoyments of heaven; there and there alone is our hope in time, and there only must be our blessedness in eternity.

HOMILY IV

Mass of One Martyr-Bishop

Sacerdotes Dei, etc.

THEN Jesus said to His disciples: If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For he that will save his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels: and then will he render to every man according to his works.—*Matt.* xvi. 24–27.

THIS is the Gospel reading of the *Common* of One Martyr and is taken from the latter part of the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew.

In these four verses there is nothing either abstruse or difficult, they are so very clear that they require no explanation; but they each contain a fundamental truth, the first two of which form the basis of all Christian morality.

True, these are common truths with which you are all familiar, having heard them announced hundreds of times, but the fact that they are familiar does not detract from their greatness and importance. I shall do no more than present them to you in their simplicity, developing them and applying them as best I can. It is with divine truths as it is with food; we taste its exquisite flavor and are nourished by it only after we have partaken of it, masticated it well, and digested it. And now for the commentary.

In order to understand the occasion that led Jesus to utter these splendid words and great truths, which we shall at once go on to consider, we must go back three verses and call to mind the facts these record.

In verse twenty-one Jesus announces to His apostles and disciples that He will soon go up to Jerusalem, that He will suffer many things there, will be put to death, and rise again the third day. His words are clear and unmistakable, they could not be more so; and the apostles and disciples were all appalled and seemingly uttered not a word. Peter, as ever the most courageous, with a confidence and a freedom characteristic of him and which the Master permitted him, drawing near to Our Lord and taking Him aside from the others, began with filial boldness to complain and to

chide Him saying: "By no means, O Lord, shall that ever come to pass which Thou hast just said of Thy death in Jerusalem. Thou shalt not die and thus subject Thyself to such ignominy; being the Son of God Thou canst not do it, Thou canst not permit it, it is unworthy of Thee." Then Jesus turning to Peter and looking sternly at him, said with a gesture of disdain: "Begone Satan; Peter, in striving to dissuade Me from suffering the death of the cross, thou showest thyself My enemy, thou art putting obstacles in the way of the work I came to do, and thou art giving a manifest proof that thou seest things and sayest things as might men of the world, and not men of God." After speaking these words to Peter in a tone loud enough to be heard by the others, and turning to all who followed Him, He said: *"If any man will come after Me."* These words, in which is summed up the whole Christian life, have already been explained in Homily II of this volume, where they are quoted from St. Luke, and hence might be entirely passed over. But as they contain one of those truths which are never sufficiently understood, it may not be out of place to return to them again and to give a new explanation of them.

Jesus Christ wished to remove a wrong impression entertained by Peter, and, according

to St. John Chrysostom, reasoned in this way: "Peter, you would have Me flee pain and humiliation and escape the cruel death that awaits Me, but I say to you and to all who will be My disciples that it would be a sorry day for you were I to follow your advice; what you say is a prompting of natural love and is not inspired by a true and perfect love of God and of His glory. Further, I say to all of you that you can not be saved if you are not ready to suffer and, if need be, to sacrifice life itself. There is only one way to gain heaven and that is to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me."

The words of Christ: "If any man *will* come after Me," should be noted. Jesus Christ does violence to no one, He forces no one to follow Him; He respects man's liberty; He invites, gently draws, He rouses and even entreats men to follow Him, but He never constrains. What sort of honor would men render God if they were compelled by main force to do Him homage? The greatness and merit of our worship and religion rest wholly upon the fact that we are absolutely free; take away this complete liberty and there would be no difference between the honor done God by trees and animals and that done Him by men. Nothing is freer than religion, says Lactantius, and this freedom constitutes the glory of the

Gospel of Jesus Christ.[1] And in order to inspire and encourage all men to walk in the way of the Cross and to deny themselves, Jesus Christ puts Himself at their head, saying: "If any man *will come after Me;* what I tell you to do I do Myself, and to know your duty you have only to fix your eyes on Me; I go before you, encourage you by My example, bear you up and strengthen you by My interior grace."

He adds: "If any man will come after Me, *let him deny himself.*" There are two wills, man's will and God's. Which of the two is to be followed as an unerring rule? Assuredly not yours, but God's, for He can not err. Hence when your will deviates from God's will, you are not to follow it; you are to lay hold of it, set it right, draw it over to God's will, make it like to it and one with it. To accomplish this you must withstand your own will, do what it wishes not to do, and refuse to do what it wishes to do. It will wish to rule and command, you must make it submit and obey; it will wish for wealth and comforts, for the pleasures of the table and the pleasures of sense, you must make it love poverty, detachment from the things of earth, the privations of abstinence, fasting, and continence; in short

[1] It is said that religion is and ought to be free in the sense that it excludes all exterior restraint and interior necessity, but not in the sense that it removes the *moral obligation* before God of being religious.

you must have no will except to do God's will; your only law must be to follow God's will and impose silence upon your own, or, what is the same, deny yourself, for this is Christ's precept: *Let him deny himself.*

Let him take up his cross, says Christ. To deny oneself implies the subjection of one's own will to the divine will, the complete mastery over one's passions and resignation to the evils and to the sufferings that come to us from without.

Note the words *his cross.* The crosses that come to us from without are countless, such are toil, poverty, persecutions, sickness, family discords, disasters, and the like. From among these crosses we are not to choose that which is less vexatious and bitter; God in His wisdom and fatherly providence selects for every one that which is fitting to him. Accept and bear cheerfully the cross He puts upon your shoulders. A father's cross is intractable and wayward children; a rich man's cross and his torment is a lust for wealth; a poor man's cross is his penury and destitution; and every man finds a cross in a rival and an enemy, who slanders and persecutes him. Let each take up and bear his cross; it comes from God, or God permits it, and that is sufficient. Do not say: I should prefer to bear this one's cross or that one's; or I should prefer to bear it at this

time or that, in this way or that. You are not to choose your cross, God chooses it; it is your duty only to accept it, bearing in mind that God knows better than you what is for your good, and in giving you a cross He at the same time gives you strength to bear it. Let every one, then, accept *his own* cross, paying no attention to the crosses of others; let him make no comparisons and utter no complaints; let him not consume his life in useless longings, but pursue his own path.

And follow Me. This is the last condition imposed by Christ upon one who will be His disciple. First, he must deny himself, next, bear his cross, and finally, follow Him. What is the meaning of the words *follow me?* They mean that one must deny himself and bear his cross, as and with the same sentiments that Christ his Master and Model bore it.

All men either bear their cross generously or drag it after them on the ground. It is not the bearing of the cross that constitutes a disciple of Christ, but the motive and the manner in which it is borne. St. Gregory says that he follows Christ who when the test comes is not only courageous, but modest and humble and an example of every virtue, since to follow Christ implies to suffer indeed, but still without ceasing to practise the other virtues. Many in following the devil suffer much and

for him lose the life which we ought to lose for Christ, or rather which we ought to lose for our own sakes.[1]

Our Lord goes on to give us a still fuller explanation of the Cross, saying: *"For he, that will save his life, shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it."* At first sight this passage may look like a play upon words, but if we search its meaning we shall find it replete with divine wisdom. In substance Jesus Christ means to say: "You must take up your cross and come after Me, you must suffer and if needs be die for Me and with Me. Should you refuse to suffer and die for Me and with Me, when called on to do so, what will be the consequence? If you do not suffer, and thus save the life of the body, you shall lose the life both of the body and of the soul. On the other hand, if for love of Me you take an account of the sufferings of the Cross and, should duty call you to sacrifice your life for Me, far from losing it, you shall save it, or rather you shall lose it on this earth to find it in heaven, you shall lose it in time to regain

[1] "Is Christum sequitur qui in periculo non modo fortitudinem adhibet, sed modestiam, sed humilitatem, etc. Id enim est recte Dominum sequi, ut et propter ipsum cuncta sufferas et alias virtues non negligas. Multi diabolum sequentes, multa patiuntur et vitam propter ipsum perdunt, quam nos propter Christum, imo vero propter nos ipsos perdimus." (S. Joann. Chrysost. Homil. vi.)

it in eternity. St. Gregory the Great illustrates this truth by a familiar and graceful image. "If," he says, "you keep wheat in the granary you will lose it; if you sow it in the ground it will renew itself. Who does not know that, when wheat is sown, it is no longer seen, and that it decomposes? When it rots underground it is renewed and puts forth green blades. Thus by making it die in the earth we cause it to give birth to a new life, and by keeping it living in the granary, we cause it to die. And the same is true of the life of a Christian; by killing the evil growth of concupiscence within us and by having a holy hatred of ourselves we shall live unto God; by fostering our evil passions and by living according to the flesh, we shall die."[1] This in brief is the entire teaching of Jesus Christ, as set forth in the verse we are explaining.

But let us follow our Divine Master and go on to the next verse, which is a further development and the practical conclusion of this teaching.

Jesus Christ had said that to give life for Him is to keep it, and that to keep life without Him and in opposition to Him is really

1 "Frumentum si servas, perdis, si seminas, renovas. Quis enim nesciat, quod frumentum, quod in semine mititur, perit ab oculis, in terra deficit? Sed modo putrescit in pulvere, inde virescit in renovatione." (Homil. xxxii.)

to lose it. The idea of losing this present life, in which are centered all the goods of this lower world, is terrifying even to the most intrepid, it is a sacrifice in the presence of which even heroes are appalled. To encourage us to make this terrifying sacrifice Jesus Christ spoke this splendid sentence: *"For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"* You set the present life above every other good; you love the riches, the honors, the pleasures, that make this life enjoyable and precious, and hence you are unwilling to give them up; but if you should lose your soul, and you will lose it if you do not, when there is a call to do so, sacrifice this life, what will remain to you? Say that you have here on this earth all imaginable riches, all possible honors, all enjoyments and pleasures, aye, that you are lord of all the earth, and then that you should lose your soul, what would all these profit you? You have only one soul, and if this is lost, everything is lost. All those other goods are outside you, they are not yourselves; they are valuable only in so far as the soul can enjoy them; they are like clothes, which are only intended to cover the body; if the soul is lost, what will they benefit you? Nothing. They are as clothing, which is useless when there is not a body to wear it. Jesus Christ, then, was right in saying:

"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" This is the truth of truths, which, when once fully understood, is sufficient to dissipate all illusions, to detach us wholly from love of the world, and to inspire us to take the most generous resolutions. It is this truth that peopled cloisters with religious and deserts with solitaries, that kept martyrs steadfast in the midst of the most atrocious torments and inspired and carried into effect the most magnanimous sacrifices. If I save my soul, and I shall save it if I am ready here on earth to die rather than offend God, I shall be eternally happy and I shall have gained all. Let us engrave this truth on the very depths of the heart, for it is of itself sufficient to make us saints.

To impress these words still more deeply upon the soul Jesus adds another phrase, which still further illustrates them: *"Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?"* If you lose your sight you may in a measure supply it by the senses of touch and hearing; if you have an arm taken off, you have still another left; if you are robbed of your goods, it is still possible to acquire others; if your good name is smirched, you may regain it; if you lose your bodily health, you may again restore it; but if you lose your soul, which is one and immortal, what can you get in exchange for it? Then noth-

ing remains, bear well in mind this word, nothing, nothing. The sun will be still luminous in the heavens, the stars will shine out in the firmament, the mountains will rise proudly toward the sky, the earth will be covered again with a mantle of green, the rivers will bear their waters on to the sea, but your soul, thrust away by God and buried in the flames of hell, will wail everlastingly without hope of ever being able to come out from that place of torment.

And here follows the last verse, which makes a fitting ending to the truths proclaimed by Christ. If you will be My disciples, Christ says, deny yourself; take up your cross and follow Me, be ready to give up all things, even life itself, rather than offend God and lose your soul, for if that is lost everything is irrevocably lost. And when will your fate be decided? When will you receive the reward of life everlasting or the punishment of eternal condemnation? When will your works be made manifest? *"When the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels, then will He render to every man according to his works."* Jesus Christ is evidently speaking of the last judgment and of the final sentence that will be solemnly pronounced on all men. This Son of man is He who as such has received all power in heaven and on earth, who as the Son of man, or as man, is the Re-

deemer of all the sons of Adam, and therefore is He also their Judge. The Father has given Him as an inheritance all the nations of the earth; they are His conquests, purchased with His blood, and hence in a special way subject to Him. He will come upon the earth at the end of time in the glory of His Father, that is, in the glory that is properly His own, as the Father's Son and in all things the Father's equal; He will come encompassed by legions of angels, who are said to be His, because as of man so also of angels, not only is He the Head but the Redeemer and Sanctifier; the Redeemer of men, because He snatched them from the slavery of the devil; the Redeemer of angels, because He anticipated them by His grace so that when the test came they did not succumb, but remained steadfast. Jesus Christ will come at the end of time with a glory equal to the humiliation of His first coming; He will come to garner what He has sown; He will come to give to every man what is in justice due him, to the good the reward of life eternal; to the wicked the punishment of eternal condemnation.

The sentence that the Judge will pronounce will be that which every man will have written by his deeds from day to day and from moment to moment in the book of his conscience. When the sun from on high floods the world

with light, it illuminates and tints all things variously, each according to its nature; it paints the lily white, the rose red, the meadows green, the sky blue, the sea azure, gold yellow, and ebony black; so also will Christ the Judge shed His infinite light upon all souls and reveal either their beauty or their deformity; He will show them as they are and as they will continue for all eternity; and all this will take place in a *moment,* in a flash, or as Scripture says, *in the twinkling of an eye,* and thus will the curtain fall upon the stage of this world. There can be no motive higher and more potent than this to encourage us to carry the cross, to war on the passions, and to practise virtue.

"Be up, then, and doing, My apostles and loyal followers," He seems to say; "deny yourselves, take up your Cross, and follow Me. On the great day of judgment, in the presence of the world assembled before Me I will give you fitting praise for all your works; I will make you sharers of My felicity and of My glory; and those who have spurned My law of self-denial, who have refused to bear My Cross, who, instead of coming after Me, have sought gratification in their pleasures, I will thrust from Me and condemn to inextinguishable fire. One or the other of these alternatives you must choose; choose now." [1]

[1] A Lapide, Commentary on this verse.

HOMILY V

Mass of One Martyr, not a Bishop

In Virtute Tua, etc.

Wisdom conducted the just, when he fled from his brother's wrath to the right ways; and showed him the kingdom of God and gave him the knowledge of the holy things, made him honorable in his labors, and accomplished his labors. In the deceit of them that overreached him, she stood by him, and made him honorable. She kept him safe from his enemies, and she defended him from seducers, and gave him a strong conflict, that he might overcome, and know that wisdom is mightier than all. She forsook not the just when he was sold, but delivered him from sinners; she went down with him into the pit. And in bonds she left him not, till she brought him the scepter of the kingdom, and power against those that oppressed him: and showed them to be liars, that had accused him and gave him everlasting glory.—*Wis.* x. 10–14.

THIS is the first time I have had occasion to take as the subject of a Homily the explanation of a passage from the Book of Wisdom. By some the authorship of this Book is attributed to Solomon, but the more common and more probable opinion is that it was not written by him, as it appeared two centuries later and was, as seems certain, written originally in Greek. Who the author was we do not know, but this matters little; it is enough for us to know that the Church has given it a place among the inspired Books and hence it is the work of the Holy Spirit, no matter whom He made use of to write it.

This Book is called the Book of Wisdom because it treats of Divine Wisdom and its works. The Wisdom spoken of in this Book is the truth which God teaches all men and which disposes and governs all things; this Divine Wisdom guided and saved all the Patriarchs and Prophets, and those who knew it not fell into every sort of idolatry and impiety. Hence if we consider the matter, it will be clear that the Wisdom whose praises are celebrated in this Book is in substance the Faith that enlightens minds and that comes from Him who is light itself, or truth, the Divine Word, who in the fulness of time made Himself man. Having said this much by way of explanation, let us go on to the interpretation of the few verses of this

Book which the Church appoints to be read in the Mass to-day, for they are replete with sublimest teachings. *"The Lord conducted the just through the right ways, and showed him the kingdom of God, and gave him the knowledge of holy things."* In the Sacred Text the passage runs: "Wisdom conducted the just through the right ways," but, as you will understand, a change in the name does not necessarily imply a change in the subject, for that Wisdom, of which the Sacred Text speaks, is in fact God, and the Church, for greater clearness and to use language adapted to the capacity of the people, has substituted *Lord* or God for the word *Wisdom.* Who is the *just one* whom the Lord conducts as if by the hand, through right ways? If we read the Book of Wisdom we shall learn from the verses that precede this one that Divine Wisdom taught and led on to salvation Adam, Noah, and Abraham, Lot and Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and all the saints who were before Christ, and we shall also learn that the *just one* spoken of in this verse is really Jacob, the son of Isaac.

In the Book of Genesis, written by Moses, we are told that Jacob, fleeing from the wrath of his brother Esau, betook himself to Laban, his uncle, with whom he lived and labored, kept the faith of his fathers and discharged all his duties with diligence. All this the sacred

writer implies in the words: *"The Lord conducted Jacob through the right ways."* In the Sacred Writings good works are often called "right ways," and evil works "crooked or wrong ways." The Holy Spirit then tells us that Jacob lived the life of the righteous and walked through straight ways, that is, he was a just and holy man. Certainly the merit of this virtuous and saintly life was the result of the good will of Jacob, but whence came this good will? Whence came the efforts that translated the good will into deeds? Whence the knowledge of truth and the strength that enabled him to put in practice the promptings of his will? From God, who enlightened his mind, strengthened and cheered him in his weakness, and sustained him in seasons of trial and distress. It is with reason, then, that the Holy Spirit says: *"The Lord conducted Jacob through the right ways."*

Nor does the goodness of God toward Jacob stop here: *"He showed him the kingdom of God."* What is this kingdom that was shown to Jacob? I think that reference is here made to the celebrated vision that God vouchsafed to Jacob while on his long journey to Mesopotamia. He saw a ladder that rested upon the earth and rose up to heaven, on the top of which God *leaned,* and on it angels ascended and descended, and he heard repeated the prom-

ises made to Abraham and to Isaac his father: "In thee and thy seed all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed, and I will be thy keeper whithersoever thou goest." Jacob then saw heaven, the abiding place prepared for the just; he experienced the providence of God, who by means of His angels watches over the righteous; he saw in a vision of faith and heard the promise of the future kingdom of Christ on earth, a kingdom that was to spread from pole to pole and from sea to sea, and that was a preparation for the kingdom of Heaven, which is its ultimate goal: *He showed him the kingdom of God.*

We, more fortunate than Jacob, see this kingdom, not in vision or as a thing to be, but already set up over all the earth; nay more, we are citizens of this kingdom, members of this Church, wherein every blessing is lavished upon us and God puts at our service His angels, His ministers of salvation, as St. Paul tells us; and we now by faith and hope not only see, but in a sense stand on the threshold of this blessed kingdom, which is promised us and for which we incessantly yearn.

And God not only showed Jacob His kingdom, but He also *gave him a knowledge of holy things.* Knowledge! This is a word that men have constantly upon their lips, that rejoices them and at times leads their hearts astray.

Where is the man who does not love, does not desire knowledge, does not bow in reverence before it? Knowledge is a gift of God, a noble participation of Himself. It is most varied; it is named from the objects to which it refers and takes on their characteristics.

There is a knowledge of the things of earth and a knowledge of the things of heaven, a knowledge of the world and a knowledge of God. Far be it from me to find fault with or depreciate human knowledge and a knowledge of the things of earth. As earthly things derive their origin from God alone, so also from God alone is a knowledge of them derived. But the distance that separates a knowledge of the things of earth from a knowledge of the things of God is infinite. For what is a knowledge of the world as compared with a knowledge of God? Simply nothing. And what will it profit us to know all the stars of the firmament and their properties, to know all the animals that live upon the earth, that career through the spaces of the heavens, that dart through the waters; to know all bodies and the elements of which they are composed and to know all sciences, if still we do not know God and what God would have us do, and if we everlastingly lose our souls? So then, my friends, while we strive to acquire a knowledge of human

sciences, let us first and chiefly strive to acquire a knowledge of God and of our souls. What a contradiction, to study to acquire a knowledge of the miserable and fleeting things of earth and to be ignorant of the eternal things of heaven! To study to know effects and natures and to be ignorant of the Cause and the Creator! To satisfy an idle curiosity men spend whole nights in deciphering a parchment and they can not find half an hour in the week to give to the study of their religion! My God, what a confusion, what an inversion of things! And then to reflect that the rich and the learned, those who have both time and opportunities for study, know nothing of holy things; while the poor, the tillers of the soil, who have neither time nor opportunity to apply themselves, possess this knowledge.

Let us continue our text: *"God made him* (Jacob) *honorable in his labors and accomplished his labors."* Jacob served for fourteen years in the house of Laban and by industry and toil, by fidelity and the favor of heaven multiplied the flocks and enriched both his uncle and himself. What does this fact recorded in the Sacred Text teach us? It teaches us that it is the duty of all, rich and poor, to labor and that no one may exempt himself from this great law; it teaches us that it is lawful

and honorable to grow rich by one's own industry and that God blesses the toil of the just and the righteous.

Some complain of the privations they suffer and of the poverty in which they and their children live. How often are these privations and this poverty the natural consequence of sloth and prodigality, of imprudence and vice! Why, then, blame either God or man for the evils which are the work of your own hands? God enriched Jacob because he toiled and saved, and because, as Scripture says, he braved the cold and the heat; do you in like manner and you will find that poverty will not come so readily to knock at your doors.

The author of the Book of Wisdom, still speaking of Jacob, refers to another fact of his life that is not without interest. *"In the deceit of them that overreached him Wisdom stood by him and made him honorable."* In the Book of Genesis, to which the author of the Book of Wisdom constantly refers us, Moses relates how Laban defrauded his nephew Jacob of the recompense due him and how, in spite of these shameful frauds, Jacob grew wonderfully rich. It is to him that these words allude: *"In the deceit of them that overreached him Wisdom stood by him and made him honorable."* From all this, my friends, we learn to put all our hope in God, who never forgets the

weak and the victims of power, who watches over them and recompenses them, frequently here on earth, and certainly in heaven. Jacob, though the nephew, son-in-law, and most faithful servant of Laban, was deceived by him, defrauded and shamefully mistreated; he was weak and the victim of that treacherous man; and still he went forth a very rich man from the house of his uncle and father-in-law, because God, who, as Scripture says, ever looks lovingly upon the suffering poor, blessed him. Never forget, my friends, that it is better to suffer than to cause others to suffer, better to be despoiled than to despoil, better to be killed than to kill, because God is never with those who inflict injury but with those who suffer wrong. All this the example of Jacob teaches us.

And here is another instance in which Jacob experienced the very special protection of Wisdom or of God. "*She* (Wisdom) *kept him safe from his enemies, and she defended him from seducers and gave him a strong conflict, that he might overcome, and know that Wisdom is mightier than all.*" Jacob, though a righteous man, had many and powerful enemies and was exposed to the gravest dangers. Esau, his brother, hated him and sought his life; Laban, his uncle and father-in-law, often deceived and despoiled him; in Sichem, owing to the fault of

his two sons Simeon and Levi, he ran great risk of being killed, not to mention the many other dangers that threatened him, but Wisdom, that is God, by His grace protected and defended him, liberated him from the midst of his enemies and shielded him from all harm. Nor is that all. During his return from Mesopotamia he had a fierce struggle out of which he came safe, and was made conscious that he enjoyed the protection of Him, who is mightier than men and who never forsakes those who trust in Him. This same God who brought Jacob safe out of so many and such severe trials will also bring us safe out of trials equally severe and numerous if we confidently trust in Him.

Following the sacred story, as recorded by Moses in the Book of Genesis, the inspired author of the Book of Wisdom passes on from Jacob to his son Joseph, saying: "*Wisdom forsook not the just when he was sold, but delivered him from sinners.*" The just one here said to have been sold is Joseph, who was hated and persecuted by his brothers and brutally sold by them to merchants who were on their way to Egypt. We are frequently witnesses of iniquities, which we see daily perpetrated under our eyes and which stir our very souls and sadden our hearts. Who is not distressed and horrified at the numerous wrongs

and crimes, the reports of which we read daily? But the world has always been the world and its works have always been wicked. Joseph was a youth distinguished by every virtue and therefore very dear to Jacob. What happened to him? His brothers, note the fact well, his own brothers, hated him ferociously. And why? Because he was pious and virtuous, because moved by zeal and brotherly love he made known to his father a detestable crime they wished him to commit, or to permit, as it would seem, upon his own person;[1] brothers hated a brother because he was virtuous; they so hated him that they could not bear the sight of him; they so hated him that they wished to murder him with their own hands, and then persuade his old father that he had been set upon, rent in pieces, and devoured by a wild beast; they so hated him that one of the brothers, wishing to save him from the fury of the others, proposed to sell him to some strangers who chanced to pass by on their way to Egypt. Brothers wished to murder a brother, a young, innocent, and virtuous lad, and did sell him for a few pieces of money! What a horrible crime, and

[1] Holy Scripture says that Joseph accused his brothers of a *delictum pessimum*, that is, as seems certain, of *sodomy*. It is probable that they wished to commit this shameful deed upon the person of Joseph. What should have inspired them with esteem and love for their brother, became the cause of their implacable hatred.

that in the very family of Jacob, who bore with him the promises and the hopes of Abraham! It is not to be wondered at, then, that even among us crimes are multiplying and that the righteous are made a target for the hatred and fury of the wicked. But they lift their eyes to Heaven and put all their hope and trust in that Wisdom, in that God, who did not forsake Joseph when he was sold by his brethren. *"Wisdom forsook not the just when he was sold."* Behold this poor boy, hated by his brothers, solicited by them to commit a nameless crime, snatched from the hands of his father, sold to merchants, who hastened to sell him again in Egypt! Nor did his trials end here. Being a slave, he fell into the hands of one Putiphar, whom he served so faithfully that he won his esteem and good will. But the wife of Putiphar conceived a lawless passion for the young slave and urged him to commit sin with her; he resisted and when the wicked woman laid hold of his mantle, the magnanimous youth fled, leaving the mantle in her hands. The lawless love of this wicked woman, as always happens, was turned into furious hatred, and having accused the chaste youth of the crime of which she alone was guilty, she had him cast into a dungeon where he languished for years. What an accumulation of misfortunes and sorrows crowded upon this virtuous young man!

Against him, who had harmed no one, all conspire—brothers, strangers, master, mistress, all persecute and pursue him; he has no one to aid him, none to comfort and console him; in a strange land and in prison he is abandoned by all; even the companion in suffering, to whom he had commended his innocence, forgot him. Is it thus, O Lord, that Thou dost deal with Thy faithful servants? Wilt Thou not have pity upon this forsaken youth? Wilt Thou thus abandon him to the fury of the wicked? No, God never forsakes any one, and how, then, could He forsake this young man, the victim of his virtue? He went down with him into the dungeon and did not forsake him in his chains: "*Wisdom went down with him into the pit. And in bonds she left him not.*" Joseph was there in a foreign land, a slave, calumniated, in prison and loaded with chains, and God was with him; He kept him steadfast under trial; He gave him the strength to spurn the allurements and seductions of a wicked woman; He sustained him and encouraged him with hope, enabling him to bear up under the weight of his fetters; and He permitted all this to show forth the virtue of the holy youth, to increase his merits, and then to exalt him to a glory equal to his humiliations.

And in fact the Sacred Text goes on to say: "*She brought him the scepter of the kingdom,*

and power over those that oppressed him; and showed them to be liars that had accused him, and gave him everlasting glory." Once the test had been made, God gave the faithful servant the reward. God Himself freed Joseph from prison and conducted him to the palace of the king, and those hands that had been manacled seized the scepter of command; Joseph held the first place after Pharaoh and every knee in Egypt bent before the poor slave. Those who had calumniated him confessed their calumny, the brothers who had persecuted him fell at his feet, and his glory spread throughout all Egypt and the land of Canaan. The great law, later on promulgated by Christ, was verified to the full in Joseph. "He who humbles himself shall be exalted," frequently it may be on this earth, and certainly in heaven.

Thus the inspired writer shows us how Divine Wisdom, or Providence, took the patriarchs Jacob and Joseph by the hand, as it were, and through a long course of years, in the midst of snares, hatreds, conflicts, trials, and all manner of persecution, led them on by the exercise of patience and virtue to the possession of glory and real happiness.

Holy Church sees in the way which Wisdom or Providence dealt with these two celebrated patriarchs a foreshadowing of His dealings with the martyrs, and hence she has very prop-

erly directed that these few verses should find a place in the Mass of this day, where they are, as it were, a eulogy of the martyrs whom we honor. Thus are the Books of the Old Testament woven into the Books of the New, and the glories of the saints who flourished in the former are intertwined with the glories of the illustrious saints of the latter, for both were victorious in their conflicts and gained their crown by having faith in the one Saviour of all, Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and honor now and for everlasting ages. Amen.

HOMILY VI

Mass of One Martyr, not a Bishop

DO NOT think that I came to send peace upon earth; I came not to send peace, but the sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for Me, shall find it. He that receiveth you, receiveth Me: and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet: and he that receiveth a just man in the name of a just man, shall receive the reward of a just man. And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little

ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.—*Matt.* x. 34–42.

St. Matthew tells us that when Jesus Christ had chosen the twelve apostles, naming them one by one, He sent them into the neighboring cities and villages to preach, thus preparing them for the great ministry they were soon to enter upon, and that in sending them He gave them suitable instructions as to how they were to exercise their mission and behave in the conflicts they would encounter, at the same time assuring them that they would come out of them victorious. And here begins the passage I have read for you and which contains truths, often indeed inculcated, but still always useful and necessary to keep in mind, both by us ministers of God and by you, the faithful. I bespeak then your good will and attention.

"Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth; I came not to send peace but the sword."

I fancy that on hearing these words which fell from the lips of Christ you will be troubled and your thoughts confused. How, you will say, is this? Is not Jesus Christ come to bring peace upon earth? Was he not called, by the greatest of the prophets, the Prince of Peace? And did not the angels, in announcing His

birth, sing over His cradle: "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will?" And when He was risen was not His first salutation to the apostles: "Peace be to you; again I say: Peace be to you"? How is it, then, that He here protests that He is not to bring peace, but the sword, that is, war? Be not troubled, my friends, the words of Christ are always the truth and can not be other than the truth. There is a peace of the world and a peace of God, that is, a peace of souls; there are guilty joys or pleasures of earth and there are joys of the spirit and of virtue. A man may be at peace with all the world, he may be honored and esteemed by all, his sleep may be the sleep of the tranquil, and yet he may be living in sin, indulging his passions, and therefore an enemy to God. This may be a rare and difficult case, but it is possible and sometimes a fact.

Such a man enjoys the peace of the world, but it is not a true peace, for in fact what peace can any man enjoy who is at enmity with God? Here is another, who is the victim of misfortunes, who is tormented and persecuted, struggling against poverty and sickness, but he is at peace with God, because he is in the state of grace, lives a virtuous life, loves all his fellowmen, and even his enemies. To all appearances he is in the midst of war, of trial and

conflict, but while he enjoys not the peace of the world, he enjoys the peace of God. By the words quoted above Jesus means to say: "I am come to you not to bring the peace of the world, not to bring the fleeting joys of earth; I am come rather to bring the sword or war there where it is necessary; I am come to say to you: Make war on all the passions, on pride, avarice, luxury, gluttony, and anger; curb your concupiscence, turn your back upon the world, despise what it values, value what it despises. In doing all this you will be in conflict with yourselves and with the world; you will stir up war, ferocious and continuous, all about you; but if, following My example and aided by My grace, you come victorious out of the conflict, you shall enjoy peace, a true and enduring peace of heart, peace with Me, with your fellow-men, the peace that I have brought from heaven upon earth, the peace that is the daughter of the victory gained over yourselves, over the world, and over the devil."

Here Jesus pursues and more fully explains his thought, saying: "*For I came to set man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daugther-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies shall be they of his own household.*" This is the sword, or the war, that Jesus Christ brings upon earth. While these expressions seem

not only harsh, but cruel and impious, they are nevertheless true, and you have already got insight into their meaning. Does Jesus Christ mean that there shall be war and permanent and absolute separation among those who should be bound to one another by the most sacred ties of love and kinship? Assuredly not, for in this case He Himself would destroy the fundamental law of that love which we owe to all, and in a special sense to our kinsfolk. Jesus Christ meant only this: In case it should ever happen that the love, which we bear father or mother, daughter-in-law or mother-in-law, or any other of our kindred, should be a bar to the love we owe God or to the service we owe Christ; if ever we find ourselves between the alternatives of being necessarily obliged to choose between those dearest to us and the love of Jesus Christ, we ought not to hesitate an instant to give up father and mother and every one, even those we most tenderly love and cherish, and follow Him.

Would you have an example of this love of Jesus Christ? Thomas More, the grand chancellor of Henry the Eighth, king of England, was pining away in prison. He was offered the alternative either of apostatizing and cutting himself off from the Catholic Church or of having his head taken off. In his dilemma his wife and daughter came to him, their hair

all dishevelled, weeping and sobbing and uttering groans of inexpressible anguish; falling at his feet they begged him to think of them and to have compassion on them. To compassionate them under the circumstances meant to trample the Faith under foot and to betray the cause of God and of His Church; the love of the husband and father was in open opposition to the love of the truth and of the Faith; he must choose; to choose the former was to reject the latter, to cling to the former was to separate himself from the latter. Thomas did not hesitate an instant; stifling the love of husband and father, aye the love of life itself, he made the love of God and of truth triumph within him, and fearlessly facing death gained a martyr's crown and a martyr's reward. Hence the passage of the Gospel is quite in keeping with that other in which Jesus Christ, speaking of scandal, says that if our eye or hand or foot scandalize us we ought to pluck out our eye and cut off our hand and foot rather than suffer the loss of our soul.

The three verses that follow are but an amplification of the passage just explained; still it is not amiss to quote them: "*He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me, is not*

worthy of Me; he that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for Me, shall find it." That is, "he that is not ready, if need be, to give his life for Me, shall forfeit it and be eternally lost; and he that is ready to give his life for Me, shall preserve it, or shall be forever saved."

I think it hardly necessary to stop to say anything of these verses, which, besides being sufficiently explained in Homily IV of this volume, can be fully understood from what has already been said. If you will bear with me I shall touch upon two truths which seem to me timely and which rise naturally out of the subject in hand.

The first is this: God is the First Cause of everything and the Source of all good; in Him are found all perfections in an infinite degree; our obligations toward Him are of all our obligations the greatest and they are indestructible, since He has given us life and preserves it, has lavished upon us and still lavishes upon us all benefits whether in the natural or supernatural order. Reason itself bids us love things according to their nature and perfection and it bids us love our benefactors in the measure of the benefits received. Who can call this principle in doubt? No one. Hence according to the teachings of natural reason the love we bear toward God ought to be beyond compari-

son of all loves the greatest, and greater than all other loves combined, precisely because God is greater than all creatures. When, then, Jesus Christ says that the love of father and mother, of children and kindred and of all things whatsoever, must yield to love of God, He enunciates a truth so evident that there can not be a shadow of doubt about it. It may seem nebulous or over austere to him who has no knowledge, or only an imperfect knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, but not so to us who know God and Jesus Christ both by reason and by faith, to us who believe in God and Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

The second truth is this: What man, no matter how great or powerful, ever held such language as this: "He who loves father and mother, son and daughter, more than Me, is not worthy of Me; he who does not take up his cross and come after Me, is not worthy of Me; he who refuses to give his life for Me, loses it; he who loses his life for Me, saves it"? Not alone to ask of all men, but to impose upon all men without exception, upon men of every state and condition in life and upon men in every age and country, a love superior to every other love, a love that is ready to sacrifice even life and to bear the cross after Him and for His sake, was something never before heard of in this world and never heard of since. And

who is He who asks this great favor, the greatest possible favor, so great that no one before Him ever dreamed of asking it, even of their acquaintances and friends? He is Jesus Christ. Behold Him; He comes before you poor, powerless, unlettered, despised, persecuted, cast off by His own people. In listening to the unheard of command made by this Man, aye imposed by Him, upon all men of every age we are constrained to conclude that either He is a madman and is raving, or that He is conscious of a power, one and infinite, and that He is God; there is no middle term.

The event will prove who He is, and has already proved it. During the course of twenty centuries Jesus Christ has obtained this prodigious love from millions and millions of men of every country. Mothers and fathers have been known to love Jesus Christ more than they loved their sons and daughters, and sons and daughters have been known to love Him more than they loved their fathers and mothers; millions and millions of men and women have been known to sacrifice life in the midst of the most atrocious torments rather than deny a single point of doctrine taught by Him; millions and millions of men and women have been seen and still are seen cheerfully to submit to nameless sacrifices, to give up everything, to forsake the world and the lawful pleasures they might have

enjoyed, and to live a life of poverty and obedience solely to show their love for Him. What after all is the life of any Christian worthy the name? It is a continuous, perennial sacrifice for love of Christ. That which He asked and which seemed impossible, He has received and is daily receiving under our very eyes. He was, therefore, not a madman, nor was He raving, but He was and is the Lord of minds and hearts. He is God. Only God could have spoken as He spoke, only God could have obtained what He has obtained. Let us, then, bow down before Him and adore Him.

Let us go to the next verse: *"He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me."* We should bear in mind that Jesus is all the while speaking to the apostles and sending them to announce the kingdom of Heaven. "Go," He says to them, "go and preach the Gospel; I am He who sends you; you are My legates and ambassadors; the doctrine that you will teach is not yours but Mine, and hence he who receives you receives Me, since I am in you and speak by your mouth. And he who receives Me, receives not a man, but Him who sends Me, namely God the Father."

In His discourses Jesus Christ is constantly directing the attention of His hearers to God, to His Father, the beginning of all things in

heaven and on earth. He refers everything to the Father, He derives everything from the Father, and rightly, since everything comes from Him and goes back to Him: *Ex quo omnia, per quem omnia, in quo omnia,* as the Apostle says. Let us lay this teaching of Our Lord to heart, and then will our minds and hearts, in the midst of the things of this world that are ever shifting, changing, and swirling about us, center in God and rest in Him, who alone is, in whom alone we can find, the little peace that is possible here below.

In this verse are contained two other truths which it is worth while drawing out. Jesus Christ is sent by the Father and holds from Him all power in heaven and on earth; we priests are sent by Jesus Christ with that power, which the Church gives us in His name; we are His heralds and ambassadors: *Pro Christo legatione fungimur;* Jesus Christ teaches, works, sanctifies, governs, corrects, exhorts by means of us. What a dignity, what an authority is ours! We, as His ministers, ought to have a vivid consciousness of this dignity and authority, we ought to honor both by being irreprehensible in our conduct; being the bearers of such a treasure, the depositories of so great a power, we ought to preserve it, defend it, make it venerable in the eyes of men, modelling our lives and conduct upon the lives

and conduct of the apostles and of Jesus Christ Himself. Woe to us priests, whatever be our rank or dignity, if by word or deed we dishonor this high office with which we are invested! Should we do so a terrible judgment, a condign punishment will await us.

Jesus Christ sends us to you, my dear friends, as the Father sent Him to the children of Israel. How should you receive us? As those sent of Christ should be received. True, we are men as you are, subject to the same passions and frailties; you should not take account of these, but of Him who sends us, whose laws we make known to you and whose graces we bear to you. When a king receives the ambassador of another king, does he thrust him aside or receive him unbecomingly because the ambassador is of low birth, short of stature, deformed in body, of vulgar aspect and repulsive presence? Assuredly not. He sees only in the ambassador a representative of the king who sends him; he receives him in the midst of the splendors of his court and loads him with honors; in his eyes the person of the ambassador disappears and he sees only the monarch whom the ambassador represents. And this is what you, my friends, ought to do in our case. Do not fix your eyes and thoughts upon our lowly origin, upon our appearance and defects, and upon our person, which may

be unattractive and abject, but fix them upon Him who sends us, Jesus Christ. Receive us, listen to us, not for our sakes, for we are nobodies, but for the sake of Jesus Christ in whose name we come to you, and to whom we are all, both we and you, subject and to whom, as to our Redeemer, we owe reverence, honor, glory, and adoration.

Jesus, continuing His instructions to His apostles, promises an ample reward to all who will receive them, saying: "*He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet; and he that receiveth a just man in the name of a just man, shall receive the reward of a just man.*" The word *prophet* may mean one who foretells future events and it may also mean simply one who teaches, who preaches the truth and discharges the office of an apostle, and this is its meaning here. Our Lord then speaks thus to the apostles: "He who receives you, that is, he who will give you a welcome, will lodge and feed you and aid you in the exercise of your Apostolic ministry, shall," as St. John Chrysostom explains, "have a proportionate share in the reward which you will one day receive of Me."[1] He who gives shelter and food to a just man, because he is just, will share in the

[1] "Mercedem prophetae accipiet illam, quam decens est, ut is capiat qui prophetam recipit; particeps erit mercedis

reward of the just man whom he has housed and fed. Nor is this all. Jesus Christ goes on to say that He promises and assures a reward not only to him who offers shelter and food to a prophet or to a just man, but also to all who render any service whatever to any of His disciples, even the most lowly: "*And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you, shall not lose his reward.*"

Who are these little ones of whom our divine Saviour speaks? They are neither the prophets nor the just spoken of above and hence they must be His disciples, the most neglected among His followers. What is the smallest kindness we can do a man? Assuredly to give him a cup of fresh water that costs nothing, not even the trouble of warming it, that is given just as it comes from the spring. Even this cup of fresh water, Christ says, given in His name to the lowliest of His disciples shall not be without its proper reward.[1] What a motive this is for us to exercise charity for

prophetae promissae." It is hardly necessary to say that the reward should be proportionate; or will be according to the merits, of which God is alone the infallible judge.

[1] "Quis erit qui se possit excusare, cum etiam pro calice aquae frigidae mercedem se Dominus redditurum promiserit? Ne forte se posset aliquis pauper de lignorum penuria excusare, aut certe dicere, se vasculum, ubi aquam calefaceret, non habere." (S. August., Serm. xii, de Temp.)

love of Jesus Christ! The least thing we do for our suffering brethren, if it be only to speak a word to comfort them, Jesus will take as done to Himself, He will be our debtor to that extent, and in time He will pay the debt, giving us in return, as He has promised, an hundredfold. But I entreat you not to forget the condition He puts, namely, that the good work done to the poor must be done *in the name of a disciple,* for the sake of Jesus Christ, and it must be inspired by faith. In aiding the poor has your motive been to feed your vanity? to elicit the praise of men? to bind the beneficiary to yourself? to promote some personal end? to gratify a prompting of the heart? or any other merely human end? If so do not look for any reward, because you have done it, not *in the name of a disciple,* not for the love of Jesus Christ, but for yourself, and *you have already received your reward.*

HOMILY VII

Mass of One Martyr

Laetabitur Justus, etc.

Be mindful that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel. Wherein I labor even unto bonds, as an evil-doer; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with heavenly glory. But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, patience. Persecutions, afflictions: such as came upon me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra: what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me.—*2 Tim.* ii. 8–10; iii. 10–11.

This short passage, read in the Mass of this day, is divided into two parts, the first of which consists of only three verses, taken from the second chapter of the Letter of St. Paul to Timothy; and the second of two verses, taken from the third chapter of the same Letter. There is an omission in the text be-

tween the first part and the second, but the sense is so consecutive that the reader will hardly notice it. This second Letter was written by St. Paul in Rome during his imprisonment there and shortly before his execution, as is clear from the Letter itself. He exhorts his faithful disciple Timothy, who had remained in Asia, to continue steadfast in the Lord, to hand on the Gospel teaching to those capable of imparting it to others, to fight bravely as does a soldier in battle, and to labor, as does a tiller of the field, who toils before reaping. And here begin the words of the Apostle of which I am to give an explanation, to which you will, as usual, kindly listen.

"Be mindful that the Lord Jesus Christ, of the seed of Abraham, is risen from the dead, according to my gospel." Let us dwell upon this verse, which contains two elementary truths of our faith. The purpose of the Apostle is to encourage and strengthen his beloved Timothy, whom he had already made a Bishop, against the coming struggles of life and to confirm him in the Faith, and to do this nothing could be more to the purpose than to call to his mind the two fundamental truths of the Incarnation of the Son of God and of His Resurrection. Let this truth, St. Paul writes, be deeply imbedded in your mind, namely, that Jesus Christ, Our Lord, is descended from Da-

vid: *Of the seed of David,* that is, He is the Son of David, a true and perfect man, and as regards His human nature in all things like unto us, sin alone excepted.

There was disseminated as early as the days of the apostles a very grave error, destructive of the mystery of the Incarnation and of all the truths of faith that are based upon it. Certain heretics asserted that the body of Jesus Christ was not a real body, but one in appearance only; that it was a body different from ours, or a celestial body; and hence it followed that Jesus Christ had not really suffered and died and risen again; and that, if He were not really man, He had not redeemed the human race and His work was not a reality but only seemingly such. The apostles spoke out against this error; St. John in his Letters protested that any one who did not confess that Jesus *was come in the flesh,* that is, that He made Himself a true man, was an enemy *of His,* and St. Paul in numerous passages of his Letters, as in this one, affirmed that Jesus Christ is the Son of David: *Of the seed of David.*

Let us, then, firmly believe, my friends, that Jesus Christ is a true and most perfect man, the true son of Mary; that He truly suffered for us and died for us on the cross, washing away our sins with His blood. With the mystery of the Incarnation, Passion, and Death of

Jesus is necessarily connected the other mystery of His Resurrection from the dead: *Be mindful that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead.*

With the Resurrection, as St. Paul so often affirms, the work of our redemption is completed; it began with the Incarnation, it was completed with the Resurrection, just as a tree begins its life when, bursting forth from the seed, it sinks its roots into the earth, and is perfect when it brings forth fruit. "This," cries out St. Paul, "is in brief my gospel, the sum total of my preaching: *According to my gospel.*" [1] Let us keep these two truths of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, which we learned as children at our mothers' knees, ever before our eyes; let us *be mindful* of them, let them be the foundation of our faith and hope, the inspiration and fuel of our love.

"In this my preaching, *I labor unto bonds, as an evil-doer.*" This cry of the Apostle seems a lament, a groan, coming up from the depths of a distressed soul, an avowal of discouragement, if discouragement could find entrance into a heart so intrepid and heroic. For three years and more he had been dragged from dungeon to dungeon, from Jerusalem to Cæsa-

[1] The phrase "According to my gospel" does not mean the Gospel written by Luke or Matthew or Mark (that of St. John was not yet written) but generally the preaching or teaching of St. Paul.

ria, from Cæsaria to Rome; he had been a prisoner under Nero, he had already stood before a tribunal, he had made his own defence, he had been left utterly alone, all forsook him: "*At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me; may it not be laid to their charge.*" [1] Looking at his hands he saw them manacled, bound in fetters suitable only for evil-doers and wicked men; he felt a wrench at his heart, his blood ran cold through his veins, and he could not help breaking forth in those strong yet piercing words of sadness, saying that he labored and suffered even unto chains, as if he had been a malefactor: "*I labor unto bonds, as an evil-doer.*"

There is certainly no sorrow that man can suffer more piercing, no anguish more overwhelming and cruel, than that he should, while conscious that he holds the truth, that he is guilty of no injustice, that he loves his fellow-men and is toiling for their good, be disowned, thrust aside, regarded as an enemy and a traitor and be publicly branded and persecuted as such. To be treated as an *evil-doer,* when one is certain that he is doing nought but good, is a trial, an intolerable grief to the soul, and to have an idea of what it means one must have gone through some such dire distress. There are agonies of the soul that are far more har-

[1] Ibid. iv. 16.

rowing than the pains that rack the body. And all those the Apostle was enduring when he wrote these words: *"I labor even unto bonds, as an evil-doer."* Let those souls, and there are many such, whom God calls to tread this bitter way; who while teaching truth are reputed to be teachers of error, or, at least, are looked upon with suspicion; who while doing good are thought to be doing evil; let them comfort themselves with the example of Jesus Christ and of His apostles, and trusting only in God go fearlessly forward in fulfilling their mission.

These words of tranquil and resigned complaint had scarcely escaped the lips of the great Apostle, when he recollected himself and added by way of correction: "Yes, I am here in chains, but only my body is fettered, not the word, not the divine truth that I announce: *The word of God is not bound.* They bind the hands, but they can not tie the tongue, and even if they should tie mine, they could not tie yours, Timothy, nor the tongues of the other apostles and disciples who are scattered everywhere and who will preach the doctrine of Christ to the ends of the earth." What a wonderful and most eloquent man was Paul, says St. John Chrysostom. "Nero clad in purple and surrounded by soldiers forbade Paul to preach the doctrine of virtue; Paul resisted him, saying:

'I will not yield; the word of God is not bound.' This tent-maker, poor, in chains, and wasted with hunger withstands the great and all powerful Roman emperor. Who is the more illustrious, he who though in chains conquered, or he who though clad in purple was vanquished? He who was manacled prostrated a crowned king."[1]

In every age as the centuries have gone by, men of the world and especially those in exalted positions, those invested with power and those reputed learned, have tried by means the most diverse to reduce to silence the successors of the apostles; at one time they have threatened them with their wrath and with the severity of the law, warning them to be silent under penalty of the sword; again, they have tried by promises and flattery to persuade them to hold their tongue; again they have attempted by scorn and scoffing, by indifference and neglect, to suffocate the word of truth upon their lips; but all to no purpose; from the bosom of the apostles and their successors has ceaselessly gone forth the mighty cry of St. Paul: *The word*

[1] "Nero purpuratus, tantoque septus agmine militum, inhibebat Paulo ne doctrinam virtutis praedicaret; obsistebat illi Paulus, dicens: Non cedo, verbum Dei non est alligatum. Cilix pellium sutor, vinctus, pauper, fameque confectus opulentiae romanae regem superantem omnibus respuebat. Quis ergo clarior, qui vincebat in vinculis, an qui superabatur in purpura? Vinctus catena diadematum prostravit regem." (S. Chrysostomus, apud A Lapide.)

of God is not bound, the word of God can not be fettered; neither threats nor violence, neither promises, nor scoffing, nor uproar can silence our tongues or hush the word of God. This is our strength, freedom to preach the word of God; the word of God is ours, in it resides our power, it was given us by Christ; we ask only one thing, liberty to announce it. To this we have a right. Do you deny it to us? Whether you do or not we shall exercise it: *The word of God is not bound.*

"*Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect,*" the Apostle goes on; therefore, that is, that the word of God may not be bound, whether it pleases men or displeases them, I shall suffer all things. I shall go to prison and if necessary to death, that it may be free and be heard by all men. And why? Because only by the word of God, the bearer of truth, can the elect be saved: *For the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain salvation.* The means then established by God to gain salvation is the knowledge of the truth, but this knowledge can be had only by the preaching of the Divine Word by God's ministers. He, then, who will not listen to God's word, who makes no account of it, who despises it and scorns it, deprives himself of the means necessary to be saved, continues in the darkness of error and ignorance and is lost. And yet how many in

our day allow months and years to go by without hearing the word of God? What can they know of God, of the soul, of the divine law, of their own duties? For them the word of God is as if it were not, as if it were bound.

And this word of God, this salvation, which is its fruit, where is it to be had? and by what means is it obtained? It is to be had in the Church, and is to be obtained through the merits of Christ: *Which is in Christ Jesus,* and its uttermost term is heavenly glory: *With heavenly glory.* Truth and grace are the seedling, sanctification is the fruit, eternal glory the recompense.

As I have intimated above, after omitting sixteen verses of chapter second and nine of chapter third, the Church adds to the Epistle the two verses I have already read for you, which remain to be explained. The Apostle, addressing himself to Timothy, praises him highly, saying: *"Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, patience, persecutions, afflictions."* Let us try to get at the meaning of each of these words. "You, Timothy," says St. Paul, "have heard and have understood my teaching; this you have done either by listening attentively and with docility to my words or by copying my conduct into your own life: *Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life."*

By the word *doctrine* the Apostle undoubtedly indicates the divine teaching imparted by himself; and by the words *manner of life* he refers to his behavior, habits, and works, which were the expression in act of his doctrine. It is indeed necessary to learn the doctrine of Christ, but what would that benefit if it is not translated into works? Nothing at all. It would be like having the plans of a magnificent home without setting to work to build it, like knowing the road to our native country without traversing it, like having food and not nourishing ourselves. Let us, then, indeed learn the teachings of Christ, and having learned them, let us incarnate them in our conduct: *Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life.*

"Not only, Timothy, have you followed me in my doctrine and in my manner of life; you have also followed me in my *purpose, faith, long-suffering, love,* and *patience.* My purpose," says St. Paul, "is to announce the teachings of Christ to as many as possible, to make His glory known and to extend it, and in doing this you have admirably seconded my efforts and co-operated with me. Confidently trusting in God and in His aid you have followed me and our joys and griefs have been common; in the midst of danger and sorrows you have ever been patient, tranquil in spirit, and imperturba-

ble, and these qualities, which are the outgrowth of charity, lead us to love our enemies as our friends, the Gentiles as the Hebrews and followers of Christ, lead us to love all and to desire the salvation of all, and moreover they make us invincible in the great art of suffering: *Thou hast known my patience.''* And it is well to note here the difference between the teaching of Christ, as set forth by St. Paul, and the teachings of the world. The world strives to conquer by making those who oppose it suffer; Jesus Christ desires to subdue the world and those who make war on Him, not by making others suffer, but by suffering Himself and bidding His followers do the same. The strength of the good and of all true Christians, their invincible strength, is that which they find in the cross, in patience, and, if necessary, in dying for those that hate them.

In referring, as it were in passing, to these things it was but natural that the persecutions and trials, of which the Apostle's stormy life was so full, should come up to his mind, and he reminds Timothy of three, the principal ones, which were quite recent: *''Thou hast ever followed me in the persecutions and afflictions that have been my inseparable companions, and you will remember well those that I endured at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra.''* Interpreters remind us that this Antioch is not the fa-

mous Antioch of Syria, on the Orontes, where the followers of Christ were first called Christians, but another Antioch of Pysidia in Asia Minor. This latter Antioch and Iconium were two cities not far from Lystra, the native place of Timothy, and in which, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles,[1] the Apostle suffered much. I think St. Paul mentions his suffering at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, because they must have been very well known to Timothy and have left on his mind a very deep impression.

"*Which persecutions,*" St. Paul goes on to say, "*I endured and out of them all the Lord delivered me.* Yes, Timothy, I have always suffered, I have suffered much, as you know, but the Lord finally delivered me from all those persecutions. Take heart, be strong, and be assured that the God who has delivered me will also deliver you."

But how can this be? it may be said. St. Paul is writing in prison, he is bound in irons, he sees the gibbet rising before him, and still he says that God has delivered him from all persecutions. How can he be said to have delivered the Apostle from all, if now, at this very moment he hears the storm of persecution gathering about his head? How are these words to be understood, my friends?

St. Paul does not mean to say that God had

[1] Chapters xiii and xiv.

caused the persecutions that encompassed him on all sides to cease, but only that God had given him the strength to bear up against them and overcome them; since to endure persecution and to come victorious out of it is for a true Christian the same as being delivered from it.

The Epistle of the Mass closes with this sublime sentence, which though it is and ever will be the sap and marrow of the entire life of a Christian, we, such is our weakness, can hardly bring ourselves to accept. Listen to it, take it well to heart, and meditate upon it every day of your lives. *"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* As I have often had occasion to say in commenting on the Gospel and Epistles, this is the foundation of all the teaching of Jesus Christ, to carry His cross and suffer for His sake. This truth has been preached incessantly by word of mouth, in writing and in every conceivable way from the days of Christ to our own; and yet, when we see it reduced to practice and made a reality we marvel at it, we raise our voice in protest, we utter interminable complaints, and we are seemingly scandalized. We preach Jesus Christ crucified, we say that we must bear the cross daily, that to gain the crown we must endure sufferings, and then when we see the Church in conflict and perse-

cuted, when we see the righteous reviled, despoiled, and harassed, we act like old women filling the world with our clamor and complaints, and we also reproach God as if He had failed of His promises. We wear the Crucified upon our breasts, but we are unwilling to be crucified with Him. This is an inexplicable contradiction, and a clear proof that while we profess with our lips the doctrine of Jesus Christ we do not love it with our hearts or translate it into deeds. But let us explain this wonderful sentence of the Apostle. *"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,"* that is, all who really wish to follow Jesus Christ not alone by faith, but by works, and wish to be like unto Him, must be resigned, as He was, to endure the persecutions of the world, since the lot of the members cannot be different from that of the head, and the treatment of disciples and children can not be better than that of the master and head of the household. This teaching Jesus Christ Himself reiterates in countless forms in the Gospel.

But some one may say: There are many pious men and excellent Christians who are neither greatly tried nor persecuted; so also there have been saints, who have abounded in all good things, who have lived and died loaded

with honors; in these at least the law of Christ is not verified.

It would be easy for me to reply that the great law of suffering, of enduring afflictions and persecutions, is a general law, made indeed for all; still this need not prevent God, for reasons known to Himself, from withdrawing from it some few of His followers, and these exceptions would prove rather than destroy the law. But I believe there is another and a clearer reply, which admits of no exceptions at all. Sufferings, afflictions, and crosses are of all kinds; some come from without, from our enemies, from the powers of this world, such as those that the apostles and St. Paul endured at the hands of the Hebrews, the Gentiles, and wicked men of every sort; others come from within, from our own passions, from our guilty habits, and from the devil, and these we find at the fireside of our homes, unknown to all the world beside. There may be a truce from vexations and trials from without, these may cease for a season, whether long or short; thus in the present age the profession of the name of Christian does not carry with it the danger of being thrust into prison or of losing one's life, as in the age of the apostles; but domestic sorrows and afflictions are never absent, and though they are not seen of men they are on

that account not less bitter or trying than those that are common and known to all, rather more so. Listen to what St. Augustine says, who will answer in my stead and most clearly: "If at the present day the devil does not inspire kings to rage against Christians, they are not on that account exempt from persecution. Only when the devil is dead will persecution cease. Can this ferocious enemy of ours do other than make war on us as long as he lives? Can he do other than rage against us, threaten us, and create scandals all around us?" And is not all this a veritable persecution? To see the evils that come upon our brethren, and that harass the Church, our Mother; to have to listen to and to read of so many blasphemies, errors, and impieties; to witness so many deceits and betrayals, so much iniquity and injustice, so much fraud and ingratitude; to be forced to live in the midst of corruptors and the corrupt; and to be spectators of so many crimes, which often go unpunished and are sometimes even lauded as virtues, all this saddens and wounds the heart, fills it with pain and anger, and, as the holy King David said, makes us weary of life. "I beheld the transgressors and I pined away." [1]

[1] "Quia diabolus modo per reges non saevit, ideo non christiani persecutionem patiuntur. Si mortuus est diabolus, mortuae sunt persecutiones. Si autem adversarius ille noster vivit,

If we are free from the external persecutions and violence of which the apostles and martyrs were the victims we can not escape those trials and afflictions which make life so painful and irksome. "If you think," says St. Augustine again, "that you can escape these tribulations, you have not yet commenced to be a Christian."[1] Let the words then of the Apostle: *"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* be always before our eyes, and not only before our eyes, but written on our hearts, for such is the wisdom of the Christian.

unde non tentationes suggerit? unde non saevit? unde non minas et scandala procurat?" (In Psalm cxxvii.)

[1] "Tot persecutiones patiebatur, non vapulando, sed malos videndo. Magnus enim bonorum labor est mores tolerare contrarios." (S. Augustinus, apud A Lapide.)

HOMILY VIII

Mass of One Martyr

THEREFORE fear them not. For nothing is covered that shall not be revealed: nor hid, that shall not be known. That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light: and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetops. And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body into hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: better are you than many sparrows. Every one therefore that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.—*Matt.* x. 26–32.

SUCH is the Gospel read in the Mass of this day, an explanation of which you have likely never heard. It is part of the discourse which Jesus addressed to the apostles when sending them to preach in the cities of Galilee.

This was intended as a sort of training for the great missions for which He was preparing them and upon which they were to enter after the coming of the Holy Ghost.

The meaning of each sentence is so obvious and clear that a commentary is hardly necessary; nevertheless following my usual custom I shall explain these seven verses one by one, with the sole view of making some practical applications that may be for our spiritual benefit.

Jesus said to the apostles: *"Nothing is covered that shall not be revealed: nor hid that shall not be known."* These and the words that follow were addressed to the apostles and not to the multitude; and while they may be in a measure applicable to the simple faithful, we should not forget that they were directed specially to the apostles, and therefore to their successors, the bishops, and, proper allowances being made, to all priests.

And here is to be noted a usage which the Hebrews observed in their synagogues and schools. The reader of the Law in the synagogue and the rabbi or teacher in the school had each by them an interpreter, who announced in a loud voice to those present in the synagogue or school what the reader, the rabbi or teacher whispered in his ear.[1] It

[1] Lingfoot *Horae Hebraicae.*

would seem that Jesus Christ, in the words quoted, alludes to this usage, and really meant to say to the apostles: "Whatever you have heard from Me in My discourses and conversations, when only a few were present, you will one day make known to all the world."

"*That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light, and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetops.*" Here Jesus alludes to another custom peculiar to the Hebrews. It is well known, and I have mentioned it elsewhere, that the houses of the Hebrews had not gables, but flat or terraced roofs, and thither they often ascended to pray, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles.[1] From this elevation the people could be addressed and the sanctification of the Sabbath and the beginning of the month announced. Jesus Christ made use of these expressions and similitudes, which to the Jews were very vivid and clear, to indicate to the apostles that the preaching of the Gospel must be public and solemn. Hereafter nothing was to be secret or hidden, everything must be public and open, and as clear as the sun at mid-day; they must preach from the housetops and from the terraces.[2]

[1] x. 9.

[2] Mussulmans at appointed hours intone prayer from high minarets, or round towers; it is quite possible that they bor-

From these words of the Gospel it might seemingly be inferred that Jesus was accustomed to preach in secret, whereas He Himself, when in the presence of Annas and answering the latter's question, said: "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither all the Jews resort; and in secret I have spoken nothing."[1] In exhorting His apostles to give the greatest possible publicity to His doctrine, Jesus by no means meant to say that He had in announcing it spoken occultly or timidly, but only that they must give still greater publicity to it, bearing it beyond the confines of Israel and making it known to the Gentiles, in villages and cities, and even to the kings of the earth.

This command which Jesus Christ gave to His apostles, affords us an idea of the genius and character of Catholic teaching. It loves the light, because it has nothing to conceal; in its elements it is the same for all; the same truths are announced alike to children and women, to the learned and the unlearned; its teachings are publicly proclaimed in the church and, if need be, in the public streets; as Tertullian says it asks only that it be not rejected

rowed this usage from the Hebrews, who announce the Lord's day from terraces.—DIDON, Life of Jesus.

[1] John xviii. 20.

and condemned until it has been examined: *Unum gestit ne ignorata damnetur.*

What a difference between the method of procedure in the Catholic Church and that of certain societies. The Catholic Church preaches her doctrines publicly and to all; she admits all to her temples, even her enemies and those who make war on her; she publicly dispenses her sacraments; she publicly performs her sacred rites and ceremonies; she prays and proclaims her laws in public; while other societies and associations, no matter by what name known, are careful to conceal and mask their proceedings; they meet in places apart, and preferably under cover of darkness; their rites are secret, their discourses are secret, their deliberations are secret, all, all is secret; only members are admitted to their meetings and the profane and all others are absolutely excluded. Why such pains to swathe themselves in mystery, when there is so much talk about publicity, such a parade of liberty? This is a case to which the words of Our Lord are applicable: "Men loved darkness rather than light, for their works were evil. For every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved."[1] The pains that these men take to hide themselves, to keep their meet-

[1] John iii. 19–20.

ings, their proceedings, and their teachings secret, is their condemnation and should be a reason for every one to shun them. Never become members of associations whose character and aim are not known, which do not wish them to be known, which impose the obligation of secrecy, and which live in darkness. No self-respecting man who values his liberty and loves truth will ever become a member of a secret association or sect, no matter how attractive and showy its uniform may be or how splendid and seductive the promises it holds out.

"It is all very well, dear Master, to proclaim publicly from the housetops the doctrines Thou hast taught us, but what will happen to us, if even Thou, who art the Son of God, hast gainsayers and enemies? If they hate Thee and seek Thy life, because of the doctrine Thou dost teach, what will be the fate of us, Thy disciples, in every way so inferior to Thee, and whom nevertheless Thou dost charge to speak more fully and openly than even Thou dost?" These were thoughts that would naturally arise in the minds of the apostles and distress them, though they did not dare to make them known. Jesus Christ read their thoughts and anticipating their difficulties, said: "*Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him that can destroy both body and soul into hell.*" A sub-

lime sentence! A most simple and omnipotent truth, that has created countless heroes and peopled heaven with saints and martyrs!

"I do not conceal anything from you," said Jesus in reply to the unspoken difficulty of the apostles, "no; I do not wish to hide anything. In proclaiming aloud everywhere the truths that you have heard from Me, you will bring upon yourselves the wrath and the fury of Hebrews and Gentiles; they will drive you from city to city, they will thrust you into prison, they will scourge you, drive you out as exiles, inflict every indignity upon you; aye, I tell you plainly, they will murder you, and what is worse and hardly credible, in killing you they will think they are doing an homage to God. But should all this make you fear? Will you on that account avow yourselves vanquished? Will you keep silence as to those truths you have learned from Me? No, never. Fear neither prison nor exile, neither torments, death, nor obloquy. Why should you fear men, even the mightiest? What harm can they do you? They may take away the life of the body, which, willingly or unwillingly, you must part with in the course of a few years; this is the greatest harm men can do you. But besides the body you have a soul; there is the life of the soul and the life of the body. The latter is in the power of men, but it is a small

matter whether regarded in itself or in the span of its duration; but the former is immortal; men, no matter how mighty their power, can not lay hands on it, and in due time also the fate of the body will be that of the soul. Fear not men, then, who at most can only kill the body; go on talking and preaching no matter what the consequence may be."

A man who by reason and faith clings steadfastly to this great truth: "I have a soul; this is immortal and none can kill it," fears no one. Let men do their worst, they can never snatch from you this life, which is God's gift. Who can take from me the life of the soul, not indeed by causing it to cease to exist, but by making it eternally unhappy and wretched? God alone can do this. If you are faithless to your duty, if you are a traitor to the truth He can cast your soul into gehenna, into unquenchable fire, and with it, at the end of time, your body also. Hence fear not men; fear only God, who can make both soul and body food for the flames of hell, which is of all deaths the most horrible, since while you are ever dying, you never die, never. Armed with this truth the Christian need fear nothing, or rather his fear of incurring the anger of God will overcome every other fear; the sight of the Supreme Judge, into whose hands he must fall and whom he can not escape ; the

sight of the pit of hell, into which he will be hurled if he fears present evil more than giving offence to God, renders him invincible and moves him to cry out with St. Paul: "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, Our Lord."[1] He who fears God, fears none other.

Still intent on comforting and encouraging the apostles in the presence of the great and formidable work He was committing to them, Jesus Christ adds: *"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?"* What, it may be asked, has this allusion of Christ to two small birds to do with the truth He is insisting on? It has much to do with it. Jesus Christ does not want His apostles to have the least fear of the difficulties, dangers, and very grave sacrifices, which the work He is committing to them will impose upon them; to bring them to banish all human fear He calls to their mind the fear of God, which is far greater and more effective than any human fear can be. But He goes further; He desires that the confidence the apostles have in God shall cast out all fear of men, and in urging this point upon them He makes use of a very beautiful and simple

[1] Rom. viii. 38–39.

image. "Consider," He says, "two sparrows," and it may be that at that very moment He saw them flying over His head or heard them chirping from a near-by tree; "consider two sparrows, they are but two tiny birds of little value and are sold for a farthing."[1] No creatures could be of much less value on earth. "Very well, then," Christ goes on, "not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father," or, not one of them shall perish unless God permits it. He watches over all His creatures, even the least of them, and those which, like sparrows, man regards as of little worth. His eye pursues them everywhere, He prepares their food, clothes them with plumage, provides everything for them, and if they perish, they do so because He either wishes or permits it. Now if God watches with such tender and loving care over the little birds of the air, will He not watch with incomparably more tenderness and love over you, whom He loves with a special love and whose sons you are?

Note well that strong and tender phrase: *Without your Father.* God is the Creator and Preserver of all creatures, He is the Cause of all, of insects as of angels; all come from Him and none can exist without Him; but of man

[1] The value of an *As*, a Roman coin, was a little over a cent and a half of our money.

God is not alone the Beginning and the Cause, He is also the Father; the Father, because upon man, more indelibly than upon all other creatures of the earth, has He stamped His image; the Father, because He loves him with a special love; the Father, because He purchased him with the price of the blood of His natural Son; the Father, because He poured out upon him His own spirit, so that man can and ought to say to Him: "Our Father, who art in Heaven!"

God is wisdom itself, from which it follows that He values and loves all creatures according to the measure of their beauty and excellence. It would be a violation of truth to love, say, a stone as much as a beast, or a beast as much as a man, or a man as much as an Angel, since their natures are diverse and their properties are also diverse. His love is the more ardent where the participation of His perfections is the more resplendent. The same rule holds among men; they value most their most beautiful works; they love most their most virtuous children, and if they did not, they would violate nature's law. Hence God ought to love men above all creatures of this visible world; and if He so cares for the birds of the air, what will He, who is their Father, not do for men? These words: *Our Father,* tell all His love; they are, if properly

understood, more eloquent than a lengthy discourse, and they make us realize that we may abandon ourselves to His providence with the same affection and sense of security that a child feels within the arms of its mother.

Christ re-enforces the argument with another equally simple and familiar image: *"The very hairs of your head are all numbered."* What is less important to man than the hairs of his head? "Very well then," Christ says, "even these are numbered one by one;" which means that God cares for them in the same way that He does for things that He counts, and He does not permit one of them to perish without His consent. If, then, He watches over the sparrows and has a care for the hair of the head, how much more solicitously and continuously will He watch over and care for men, and especially for His apostles? This is really what He says in the following verse: *"Fear not, therefore, better are you than many sparrows,"* and He might have added: "than much hair." Confident, then, that your Father in heaven watches over you, that He is all-knowing and all-mighty and loves you as His children, what should you fear? Forward then, preach the Gospel fearlessly, and commit yourselves and your work into the hands of God.

The last verse, which puts the seal upon

all that has been said and was a powerful incentive to the timid apostles to cast aside all fear, is as follows: *"Every one, therefore, that shall confess Me before men, I will confess him before My Father, who is in heaven."* Our blessed Lord says in effect to His apostles: "In fearlessly proclaiming My teachings before men and tyrants, at the cost it may be of honor and life, you will range yourselves under My banner, you will declare yourselves My disciples and acknowledge Me as your Leader; and I pledge Myself that, on the great day of judgment, in the presence of the whole world, assembled before the majesty of the Heavenly Father, I will recognize you as My disciples, I will render you full justice, and I will give you the reward which is your due. Whosoever does as you do and confesses Me on earth, I will confess him in heaven; and whosoever will profess My doctrine in time and honor it by a life of worthy deeds, will be recognized by Me and crowned with glory in eternity."

And note well, my friends, that Jesus Christ speaks in this place, as is clear from the text, of an external, visible, and public profession. But some one will say: Is it not enough to believe with the heart and to profess Jesus Christ and His teaching in the sanctuary of the conscience? Why should words and outward acts be also necessary? Let him who so

speaks listen to the words of St. Paul: "With the heart we believe unto justice, but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation;" in other words there must be faith in the depths of the soul, but this is not enough; to be saved, that which is believed by the heart must be professed by the tongue. Tell me, pray, has God given you only a soul together with the thoughts and affections that take birth in it? Assuredly not; He has given you a body, a tongue, hands, senses, and all the members by which you make known your thoughts and affections. God is the Creator both of your soul and of your body; it is your duty then to honor Him both with soul and body. You honor God with your soul by making Him the subject of your thoughts and by loving Him; and you honor Him with your body by confessing His faith with the tongue, by singing His praises, by blessing Him, bending the knee before Him, uncovering the head, lifting your hands to heaven, and performing those other outward acts, either prescribed by the Church or introduced by custom, which are the natural and spontaneous expressions of the soul's thoughts and feelings. You are only one sole being, one sole person, though your nature is twofold. Can you divide that which is one? Can you separate the body from the soul? Can you serve God with the soul and the world with the body? It is im-

possible. The heart can not believe one thing and the tongue avow another, this would be lying and hypocrisy. Let us honor God then with the heart, but let us honor Him also with the body. Consider the martyrs; they believed in God and in Jesus Christ; by a single word, by a single act, they could have saved their lives and escaped the most atrocious torments; all that was required was to utter with the tongue a single word contrary to the faith they professed in their hearts; to burn a single grain of incense before an idol, which in their hearts they loathed. But they did not say that word, nor would they burn that grain of incense; for they knew that the tongue was the faithful interpreter of the heart, and that deeds were the mirror of the soul and the outward expression of faith. Hence, then, let no one of you ever from a craven fear of what men may think of you, or from dread of being reproached or sneered at or mocked, refuse to avow your faith or openly to confess Jesus Christ, when you are in honor and duty called upon to do so.

What! To be ashamed of Jesus Christ! To blush at the avowal of that faith that has subdued the world and covered it with the trophies of the victorious! Where is the soldier who in the face of the enemy would conceal his uniform, or fold up and hide his

flag? Where is the servant who would think of refusing to recognize his master? Where is the son who would hesitate to acknowledge his father? Away, then, with this craven slavery of human respect; let us always and everywhere take a holy pride in openly confessing Christ before men that He on the great day of judgment may confess us before His Father in heaven.

HOMILY IX

Mass of One Martyr in Paschal Time

THEN shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them, and taken away their labors. These seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation, saying within themselves, repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they whom we had sometime in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their lives madness, and their end without honor: Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints.—*Wis.* v. 1–5.

THESE five verses, which the Church appoints to be read as the lesson in the Mass of this day, are taken from the fifth chapter of the Book of Wisdom. It rarely happens that any part of the Books of the Old Testament is read in the Mass instead of a passage from one of the Epistles, the common practice being to read some portion of one of these, chiefly of those of

St. Paul, and hence this lesson is uniformly called the Epistle. The motive of the Church in sometimes substituting a passage from the Old Testament in place of an extract from the Epistles of St. Paul or of the other apostles is to show the harmony and equality between the writings of the Old Covenant and the New, and because many passages in the former admirably express the spirit of the feast that is being celebrated and the characteristics of the saints who are being honored. To-day we are commemorating the glorious deeds of a martyr who sealed the faith with his blood and fearlessly faced the wrath of tyrants and executioners, making no account of the present fleeting life in his desire to secure the immortal life to come. The few verses that I have read for you give a vivid description of the triumph and glory of the martyrs on the great day of judgment, when brought face to face with the wicked who afflicted them, and of the confusion and desperation of the latter. And now for the commentary.

In the fourth chapter of the Book of Wisdom the inspired writer draws out a beautiful contrast between the pious and chaste generation and the generation of the impious and the adulterers, who, because they despise Wisdom, will be cast off by God and receive the chastisement their works deserve. Continuing the contrast

between the wicked and the righteous, he considers and describes the bearing of both on the day of judgment: "*Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them and taken away their labors.*" On that great day, when the works of all shall be uncovered, what will be the bearing of the righteous? "They shall stand with great constancy against those that afflicted them on this earth," they shall be without fear, and, relying on the witness of a good conscience, absolutely secure of themselves; they shall be like soldiers who return victorious from the field of battle and are hailed with shouts of triumphant joy. Jesus Christ, speaking in the Gospel of the signs that shall precede the final judgment, says to the apostles: "*Lift up your heads,* because the hour of justice and of your triumph is at hand: *Because your redemption is at hand.*" These words of Our Saviour, if I mistake not, are parallel to those of Wisdom, and show what will be the joy of the elect when they stand face to face with the impious, terrified and trembling, with those especially who persecuted and harassed them in a thousand ways and robbed them of their just recompense: *Against those that afflicted them and took away their labors.* Then will be seen the slanderer, the defamer, the deceiver, and the oppressor, and face to face with them will be the slandered, the de-

frauded, the deceived, and the oppressed; then will hypocrisies be unmasked, betrayals revealed, swindling and injustices, which it may be were once regarded as virtuous and honorable transactions, worthy of praise, exposed and laid bare. Yes, it is but fair and just that Nero shall finally confront Peter and Paul, whom he condemned to death; that Diocletian shall confront those countless armies of Christians whom he had barbarously murdered; that Henry the Fourth should stand in the presence of Gregory the Seventh, whom he ferociously persecuted; that the poor workman, the poor widow, the helpless orphan, shall appear in judgment against the hard-hearted employer, the merciless defrauder and devourer of their substance. One of the sublimest spectacles and the most pleasing to the heart of man is to see injustice repaired and the wicked and powerful laid prostrate at the feet of their innocent victims. We all suffer and complain and fume when we see the poor oppressed, the innocent outraged, the virtuous betrayed and ill treated by the wicked and the malevolent; we feel an inexpressible desire to see things set right and justice again seated upon her throne. It is but fitting that our conscience should finally enjoy the realization of this desire and that it should on that day see all injustice repaired. Ye souls who suffer and are under

the weight of injustice, of whatever kind it may be, be comforted, for your hour and that of your oppressors will infallibly come. God has given His word, and His word never fails.

What will wicked men and persecutors do, what will they say, when they see their victims encompassed with glory and secure of a blessed eternity? The Sacred Text tells us: *Those seeing it shall be troubled with terrible fear and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation.*" Seeing the righteous, whom once they scorned and persecuted, now glorious and transformed into their judges, they will realize what lot awaits them and their hearts will quail and be filled with unspeakable terror. These words of the Book of Wisdom recall to our minds the parable of Lazarus and the rich glutton. The latter, having gratified his every wish, having lived in ease and luxury, in feasting and revelry, and having enjoyed every pleasure, dying was thrust into hell. Lifting up his eyes from the midst of those consuming flames, he saw Lazarus, the mendicant, who lay at his gate, begging to be filled with the crumbs that fell from his table, while the dogs, more charitable than he, came and licked his sores. He saw him tranquil and happy in the bosom of Abraham. What a change! The rich man in the flames of hell begs for a drop of water to cool the burning

thirst that consumes him; Lazarus, the mendicant, in the abode of the blessed; the rich man, constrained to pray and implore the mendicant to have pity on him, to give him but a mere drop of water, and does not receive it. How are their lots changed, aye inverted. Where there was wailing there is now rejoicing; where there was rejoicing there is now wailing; where there was wealth and an abundance of everything, there is now extremest penury; where there was extremest penury, there is now lavish abundance; he who contemned is now himself contemned, he who was contemned is now supremely honored. God has done justice as only He knows how to do justice. As this startling change fills the impious with amazement, so must it also fill them with anguish and terror.

"Then they said within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they whom we had sometime in derision, and for a parable of reproach." How, you will ask, can these impious repent? And if they repent, can they not also be saved? Can they after death, and before the tribunal of Christ, still repent and be saved? There is a twofold penitence, my friends; there is a penitence for having offended and transgressed His law, that leads the soul utterly to reject what separates it from God and to cast itself into His fatherly arms; this is a good and wholesome penitence,

and one by which, as long as we live on this earth, we may be saved. But there is another penitence which indeed detests what separates the soul from God, not because it is evil and separates it from God, but solely because of the bitter temporal consequences it inflicts. Thus the thief repents of the theft he has committed, of the plunder he has stolen, because in consequence of it he is pining in prison; thus the glutton deplores and curses his intemperance, because in thus indulging his appetite he has squandered his fortune and ruined his health. There is a penitence, too, that has a horror of the sin committed, but coupled with it there is no hope of obtaining God's pardon, and this is the most atrocious injury that can be done God, since it is a denial of His goodness, and such was the repentance of Judas. Such penitence avails nothing, even in this life, as the Catechism teaches and as reason itself will readily understand. Here there is a question of sinners who have already quitted this present life and are eternally in a state of sin. What sort of penitence can they have? A penitence that comes not from the grace of God, for this is restricted to the time of trial or to this present life, and hence such penitence is utterly worthless; it is a penitence without a ray of hope, a penitence that is forced from the sinner by the sight of chastise-

ment, a penitence that does not, and can not change the will; it is the penitence of the drunkard, who though fallen to the ground still loves and continues to ask for drink; of him who voluntarily casts himself over a precipice and wants to remain there, to whom, though he is uttering cries of despair, no one is able to reach a hand and help him out. This is the penitence of the wicked, a useless penitence, a penitence of desperation, a penitence that tortures the soul, but does not and can not work amendment of life and conversion to God.

From such tortured souls there comes forth a cry of grief and desperation, "*These just,*" they say, "*are they whom we had sometime in derision and for a parable of reproach.* These righteous, now brilliant with glory and our judges, are they whom we derided, mocked, and vilified."

There is assuredly no punishment more atrocious than that of one who, having been great and powerful, sees himself prostrate at the feet of him whom he had regarded as little better than the sweepings of the earth and whom he is now forced to recognize as his judge and lord. A man who hated Mardochai and wished to hang him from a gibbet, on being compelled to hold the stirrup of his horse and to do him royal honors, experienced this anguish and humiliation, and returning to his house covered

his head and broke out into a flood of tears. What, then, will be the feelings of the wicked on seeing the righteous and the poor, upon whom they did not deign to cast a glance and upon whom on this earth they heaped scorn and insult, now and forever crowned with such glory? "*We fools,*" they will say weeping and sobbing, "*we fools esteemed their life madness and their end without honor.*" We are the fools, not they; our life, not theirs, is a madness; our end, not theirs, is without honor.

What do the wicked, and men of the world generally, say of the good and of their conduct? How do they bear themselves toward them? The leaders of the army of Jehu said of a prophet sent by Eliseus: "*He is mad.*" Festus, the governor, after hearing from St. Paul an account of Jesus Christ and His doctrine said with a loud voice: "*Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.*" Nay, more, we learn from the Gospel that the kinsmen of Jesus Christ said He was mad and that Herod said the same. Good religious people, pious and holy souls, are by the world said to be deranged, and you yourselves have often heard them so characterized. But on the great day of judgment things will be seen in the divine light as they are, and then it will be made clear who are the fools and who are the wise. The mortification of the body, the custody of

the senses, the practice of humility, living chastely, suffering injuries and pardoning them, giving up pleasures, withdrawing to the cloister, living under obedience, loving and observing poverty, all these are now regarded by worldlings as the results of small, feeble, infirm, and childish minds; but then they will be pronounced to be, what they really are, great, wise and heroic conduct, and they will force the worldlings themselves to confess: *We are the fools.*

Let us hope that none of us on that awful day will be obliged to repeat these words of inexpressible anguish: "We are the fools, and our life has been a life of madness."

Here follow other words that the author of the Book of Wisdom puts into the mouth of the wicked. *"Behold how these righteous, whom we have scorned and vilified, are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is with the saints."* It is this that is the culmination of the rage and desperation of the reprobate. The supremest greatness, the highest glory to which any man can aspire is that of being a son of God by adoption, and this is effected by sanctifying grace. Such is the greatness and the glory of those poor souls who were despised by the great and supercilious of the world; and these same proud and supercilious worldlings

are now spurned away and cursed with obloquy. What grief is theirs! What desperation!

To be the sons of God by adoption and to have our lot with the saints, that is, to enjoy the same happiness that they enjoy, is one and the same thing. Who are the saints? They are those who are adorned with sanctifying grace, and hence bear within them the image of God and are His sons through the Holy Ghost, who is poured out in their hearts. Happy are they!

May the merciful God grant us all this greatest of graces, namely, to be of the number of His sons, and to have our lot with the saints, who reign forever glorious in heaven.

HOMILY X

Mass of One Martyr in Paschal Time

I AM the true vine; and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me, that beareth not fruit, he will take away: and every one that beareth fruit, He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean by reason of the word, which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch can not bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing. If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you.—*John* xv. 1–7.

THESE words are a portion of Our Lord's discourse after the Last Supper. It was spoken, as is clear from the Gospel of St. John,[1] who alone records it, partly in the Cenacle itself and partly as He went on toward Gethsemani. In the first part of the discourse, spoken in the Cenacle, Jesus Christ is wholly intent on preparing the apostles for the impending separation, encouraging them and promising them that they would be again united, first, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, whom He was soon to send to them, and next, by a still more intimate union with Him in the Father. Having gone out from the Cenacle Jesus continued the discourse as He went along, still addressing the apostles, some of whom walked on either side of Him, while others followed close behind. The subject of the discourse is the intimate union through grace and charity which the apostles, and generally all His disciples, must have with Him. To bring out this admirable union and the sublime effects that are a consequence of it, following His method of teaching by sensible similitudes, He makes use of the apt and beautiful image of the vine. And here begins our commentary, which being of great interest, should command your entire attention.

[1] xiv. 31.

"I am the Vine." [1] The synagogue was also a vine, but a wild and spurious one, that brought forth, not sweet but wild and bitter grapes, and in contrast to this Jesus calls Himself the *true Vine.* Why did Jesus make use of the image of the vine, rather than of any other bush or tree? First of all I believe He made use of the figure of a vine, because all along the road he was traversing the vine, which had already begun to sprout and put forth leaves, was visible to Himself and His apostles.[2] Moreover, the vine is remarkable among plants for its fecundity; it gives us the rich juice of the grape; it grows luxuriantly and hence requires the pruning knife; and it demands the care of the vinedresser to keep the soil about its roots, to pluck out the weeds, to cultivate and fertilize it. Again, a vine that produces no grapes, or withers away, is not like the wood of other trees, good for something else; it is only fit, as Ezechiel says, to be cast into the fire.[3] It may be, too, that Jesus preferred the vine to any other

[1] In the original Greek the phrase runs: "I am *that true vine,*" thus alluding to some other vine that is not the true one. It may be, too, that in saying: *that true vine,* He alludes to the words of Ecclesiasticus: *"As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor,"* etc. xxiv. 23.

[2] It was then about the end of March or the beginning of April, and hence in that warm climate the vine must have been in full leaf.

[3] xv. 1–4.

plant because He had only a little while before changed wine into His blood and given it to His apostles to drink.

"I am the true Vine." Is He the Vine as man or as God? As to this there can be no doubt; He is the Vine inasmuch as He is man, since He goes on to say that men are the branches, and, as St. Hilary states, the vine has the same nature as the branches, and not as the husbandman.[1] Jesus is the true Vine inasmuch as He is man! Note the vine; its roots are invisible and sunk into the earth whence it draws part of the food and forces necessary to its growth and this it communicates to the branches. So also Jesus Christ as man lives an invisible life in the bosom of His Father, and thence draws the knowledge, power, sanctity, all that divine life, which He incessantly communicates to the branches united to Him by faith and operative charity.

"And My Father is the husbandman." The husbandman sets out the vine, prunes it, loosens the soil about it, plucks out the weeds that gather round it, fastens it to supports, fertilizes it, and does everything for it that is required and without which it would not yield an abundant vintage. God the Father has His eyes ever

[1] "Idcirco Christus carnem assumsit, ut illi quasi viti nos homines carnei, quasi palmites inseri possemus." (Lib. ix, de Trinit.)

upon Christ the Vine and upon His branches, the members, who constitute the Church. By the toil of the apostles and of priests He continually cultivates this vine, illuminates and warms it with the sun of truth, prunes it by the law of mortification, irrigates it with the waters of grace, defends it against its enemies, in a word does everything that a skilful vinedresser would do.[1]

"*Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, he will take away; and every one that beareth fruit, He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*" These are the words of Our Lord. Bunches of grapes grow only on branches; now there may be branches and twigs that bear either no fruit or very little, and branches that bear abundantly. What does the intelligent vinedresser do? He cuts away at once the branch that bears no fruit, and that which bears only a little or a moderate quantity he purges, cuts, and prunes in order that it may bear more. Note well the words of Christ, my friends. He speaks of branches, which though united to Christ, the true Vine, produce no fruit of any kind. Who are these? They are those while having the Faith and professing the Creed and

1 "Colimus Deum adorando, non arando: et colit nos Deus meliores reddendo; extirpat enim verbo suo mala semina de cordibus nostris: aperit cor nostrum tanquam aratro sermonis: plantat semina praeceptorum, expectat fructum pietatis." (S. August., in Joann. Serm. lix, apud A Lapide.)

living in the Church, produce no good works and do not obey the Commandments. What will the heavenly Vinedresser do with these when their hour comes? He will cut them off, and, He says further on, He will cast them into the fire. Learn then, my friends, that it is not enough to be a Christian and to believe, not enough to be in the Church, not enough to be a branch united by faith to Jesus Christ, the Vine; we must also supplement all this by good works, we must be branches loaded with bunches of grapes, if we will not be mercilessly cut off and cast into the fire.

And if the branch bears fruit, but only a little and not such as it should, what then? Then the vinedresser sets to work at that vine and branch, and leaves nothing undone to make it produce more and better fruit. Those branches that are capable of bearing more and better fruit represent those Christians, who indeed believe and whose works are in keeping with their belief, but whose good works could be still better and more numerous. And what does God, the heavenly Vinedresser, do to bring this about? He purges them: *He will purge it.* The vinedresser takes his knife and cuts away the superabundant growth of the branch, in order thus to save the sap and make the branch more vigorous and fruitful. What is the signification of this? The heavenly Vinedresser

coming, purges Christians in order that their good works may be still better and more abundant. He purges them, as He will soon tell us, with the word, that is, by giving them a fuller and clearer knowledge of the truth. As a rule works are proportionated to a knowledge of the truth. The more one knows, the better are, or ought to be, his works, since then he knows better what to do and what to avoid, and because the light that enlightens his mind should be as a fire that kindles and warms the will and impels it to do good works. He purges Christians by sending them sorrows and afflictions, both interior and exterior, thus detaching their hearts from the worthless things of earth; He purges them in countless other ways unknown to us, but known to Him, who turns everything to the welfare of the elect.[1]

"*But you,*" Christ went on to say, "*are now clean by reason of the word, which I have spoken to you.*" Were the apostles already clean and perfect, as Jesus Christ seems here to affirm in set terms? Were they not on the contrary imperfect, since Christ foretold that

1 "Palmes fructuosus purgari dicitur, quia per disciplinam reciditur, ut ad uberiorem gratiam perducatur. Sic enim spicarum grana tribulis attrita aristis et paleis nudantur. Sic olivae proelo pressae in olei pinguedinem defluunt. Sic botri vinearum tunsi calcibus, in vinum liquescunt." (S. Greg. M. Epist. lib. vii. c. 32.)

Peter would deny Him that very night and that others would forsake Him and be scandalized in Him? Jesus Christ in saying: *"Now you are clean by reason of the word I have spoken to you,"* did not mean to say that they were in every sense perfect, so that they could not be more so, but only that He had, by the truths He had taught them and the instructions He had given them, laid the foundation of their perfection and sanctity; He meant to say that He had sowed in the soil of their hearts those prolific seeds, which would go on growing and growing until the work of their sanctification would be completed and they would, like branches, be so loaded down with fruit that they could bear no more. The farmer, when he has ploughed his field, sowed his seed, and covered it over says: "My work is done, now I am sure I shall have an abundant harvest, for I have done my part." So also did Christ say: *"You are clean by reason of My word,"* looking, that is, into the future and regarding the work as completed. *"You are clean,"* says St. Augustine, *"that is cleansed and to be cleansed;* if now you are not so, you will be so, but in virtue of what you have received and learned from Me." This sentence of Our Lord teaches us the supreme importance of the word of God, which is the first beginning of our sanctification and salvation.

Let us follow our divine Master, who continuing His discourse says: "*Abide in Me, and I in you.* You know," He seems to say to His beloved apostles, "that the branches are living and bear fruit only as long as they continue united to the vine; I am the Vine, you are the branches; continue united to Me, not only by the bond of faith, but by charity and good works, and I will pour out in you My very life, and you, like thrifty, vigorous vines, will wax strong and produce fruit unto eternal life."

Between the branches of the natural vine and us, members of Christ, and branches of Him, who is the true Vine, there is a substantial difference, which we should keep in view, and it is this: "The branches of the natural vine never detach themselves from the vine of which they are the outgrowth and prolongation; they can be separated from the stem of the vine only by some external force; but we, branches of the true Vine, can, and too often do, separate ourselves from Him, since being endowed with free will we can take our spiritual life by sin, just as we can take our natural life by suicide." This is why Jesus Christ says to His apostles and to us all: "*Abide in Me.* Woe to you," He says, "if you separate yourselves from Me, for then the currents of My grace cannot flow over your souls."

The necessity of this union between the

branches and the vine, or between men and Jesus Christ by faith and charity, is more fully brought out in the verses that follow. "As," says Jesus Christ, "as the branch can not bear fruit of itself, and must abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me." Whence does the branch that bends under the weight of the bunches of grapes draw the sap of life? Certainly from the vine. And should it be separated from it, it would wither away and die. And can the vine bring forth fruit without the branch? No, it can live by itself, even without branches, but it can not produce grapes. Hence to bring forth grapes, the simultaneous action both of the vine and of the branch is required. The vine causes its life-giving sap to pass into the branch; it begins the first movement of vegetation that appears in it and continues it unceasingly until the grape ripens; once the grape is mature the flow of life ceases. So also Jesus Christ by His grace enlightens the mind, stirs the will, begins in man the work of sanctification and continues it until it is completed, and when the fruit is detached from the branch by death and transported to heaven, the flow of grace ceases and gives place to the radiance of glory.

Can you, my friends, see with your eyes and touch with your hands the life-stream that from root and stem goes perennially coursing

through the branches, is diffused through minute and delicate fibers and filaments, and builds up the rich fruit of the grape? No, you can neither see nor touch it, no matter how keen your sight or sensitive your touch; but you can both see and touch at pleasure its effects, in the luxuriant foliage and in the branches, loaded down with bunches of grapes, that grow, and swell out, and are purpled by the sun. So also neither can you see nor touch the divine grace that comes from Jesus Christ, the true Vine, and is diffused through channels unknown to us, first in the mind and heart, and then manifests its presence in our words and works, desires and affections, which are the grapes and fruit that we bring forth.

Still using the graceful image of vine and branches Jesus, as if condensing all He has said, adds: *"I am the Vine, you the branches."* The life of vine and branches is one and the same in precisely the same way that the life of the head and the members of our body is one and the same; but in order that this life may continue to be one and the same, what is required? The union between the vine and the branches, as between the head and the members, must be intimate and continuous; and therefore Our Lord, ever insisting on this intimate and continuous union, repeats again, but still more forcibly, what He has already said,

"He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit." The essential condition in a Christian to bring forth abundant fruit, or to do many good works, is that he shall continue united to Jesus Christ by faith and charity, and Jesus Christ will surely continue united to him by His faith and love.

From these words of Christ: *"He that abideth in Me and I in him,"* it might be inferred that man first approaches to Jesus and unites himself to Him, and that then Jesus Christ draws near to man and forms a union with him. If this were true, it would be man who takes the first step toward God, which is clearly false. This would be the same as saying that the branch first unites itself to the vine, and that then the vine unites itself to the branch, whereas the reverse is the case, since the vine produces the branch and in producing it unites it to itself and makes it live of its own life. Our Saviour in saying: *"He that abideth in Me and I in him,"* meant only to teach us that we can go out from Him, separate ourselves from Him by losing the faith and grace received from Him through no merit of ours; He meant also to teach us that if we always abide in Him, He will always abide in us, that He will never abandon us first, or that He will abandon us only when we abandon Him, as St.

Augustine beautifully says: *He deserts only the deserter.*[1]

And here follows a sentence by which Jesus Christ puts the seal upon His teaching and which contains a truth of the highest importance: "*For without Me you can do nothing.*" Consider well, my friends, these weighty words: "*Without Me*, that is, without the aid of My grace, which enlightens and stimulates you, which animates and accompanies you, you can do nothing." He does not say: "Without My grace you can do little or much, can do it easily or with difficulty, sooner or later, perfectly or imperfectly, in this way or that, but simply, without My grace you can do *nothing,* absolutely *nothing,* at any time or any place—nothing. And can I not without the aid of grace have even a thought that will avail toward gaining eternal salvation? Can I not even desire it or wish it, which seems only a trifle? No, it is a truth of faith that of ourselves and by our own powers we can do nothing without grace: *Without Me you can do nothing.*

May it not be that Jesus Christ in affirming that without Him we can do nothing means that without intelligence and will and our natural life, all of which are gifts of God, to

[1] Non deseris nisi deserentem.

which by our merits we had and have no claim, we are absolutely incapable of any act, even the most insignificant? There is no doubt that our existence, intelligence, and will, our body and our soul are all gifts of the divine goodness of the Creator, and that without them we can neither think, nor speak, nor do aught else, but it is not of these gifts that Jesus Christ speaks in the passage under consideration. He speaks of gifts incomparably more precious, of the gifts of grace, which He merited for us by His passion and death. Could man ever by his intelligence and will, by his natural endowments, have merited the grace which constitutes him a child of God and an heir of Heaven? Could he by these natural endowments have even disposed himself to merit the smallest grace that would avail for his eternal salvation and for attaining eternal glory? Absolutely, no. Should I ask if iron can be converted into gold, or if figs can be gathered from thistles, or if a body can produce a soul, or if the eye can hear, or the ear see, you would answer at once, no, for between these things there is no affinity, no proportion.

Will you say, then, that without grace we can do nothing, but only evil? This would be another error. Without grace we can do nothing to merit life everlasting, but we can do

good works in the natural order, which give the right to a natural reward or recompense. Gentiles and Hebrews, Mussulmans, heretics, and schismatics can do and do many good works, aye excellent works; they love and help their parents, they give alms and exercise hospitality, they are just in their contracts, they keep their word and do many other good actions. These actions are all naturally good and merit and will obtain a reward, but they do not merit the vision of God and the everlasting happiness possessed by Christ. In a word these good works done without grace are like the fruit of a wild tree; the good works done with the grace of Jesus Christ are the fruit of a grafted tree, and are of wholly another nature. Grace is the graft that transforms us into other beings and gives us the power to produce the divine fruit of everlasting life. The works done without grace are as wild grapes; those done with grace are as grapes that are sweet to the taste. Let the truth, then, clearly set forth by Jesus Christ remain firmly fixed in your mind, namely, without His interior grace, enlightening the mind and moving the will, we can do nothing: *Without Me you can do nothing.*

Let not men who have made shipwreck of the Faith, who care not for grace nor for the

means of acquiring it, and who do some good works, say: "We shall be saved." They grossly deceive themselves.

"If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire, and he burneth." Our Lord has already said that to bear fruit unto eternal life we must be united to Him, just as the branch to bear fruit must be united to the vine; here He inverts the form of speech, but reiterates the same truth. This usage is common in Holy Scriptures and is frequently employed by Our Lord. The truth is first established by affirming it, and it is again established by denying the contrary, as when it is said: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned."

"I have told you," Our Lord says, "to abide in Me by faith and charity; should any one not abide in Me, that is, continue united to Me by faith and charity, know ye what will happen to him? He shall be cut off, separated from Me, as the worthless and unproductive branch is cast off from the vine, and once separated he shall wither, and when dry will be gathered up and pitched into the fire, and he shall burn." And note how Jesus Christ here indicates all the consequences that the sterile and fruitless branch, which will not abide in the vine, will

undergo. First of all he is cut off from Christ and from His grace: *He shall be cast forth;* next, he withers away, thus not only losing grace, but drying up the fountains of it, namely, the word of God, prayer, and the sacraments, all of which he abandons; finally, at death, like a dry branch he is, as St. Matthew says,[1] gathered up by the angels and cast into eternal fire. The twigs and branches of the vine, as St. Augustine says, are good for nothing; they are fit only to be burned.[2] And here, my friends, is enumerated in explicit terms the dogma of eternal punishment, reserved for the wicked in the life to come: *"They shall cast him into fire and he burneth."*

And now for the last verse of the passage of the Gospel. *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you."* These words are worthy your attention. Thus far Jesus Christ has insisted on the necessity of abiding in Him; in seven verses He repeats this truth five times and always in nearly the same words; here He uses a somewhat different phrase, but one having the same meaning, and more fully bringing out the sense of His

1 xiii. 41, 42.

2 "Ligna vitis praecisa nullis agicolarum usibus prosunt, nullis fabrilibus operibus deputantur. Unum de duobus palmiti congruit: aut vitis, aut ignis; si in vite non est, in igne erit." (S. August. Tract. 81 in Joann, apud A Lapide.)

discourse. *"If My words abide in you;"* hence the abiding of Jesus in us and we in Him implies that His words shall abide in us, that is, the truths that He taught, or the faith that kindles the flame of charity and produces good works. When the words, or the truths of faith, abide in us we shall by them and because of them be stimulated to pray and to direct our desires to heavenly things, and the consequence will be that we shall obtain what we ask, since, as St. James says, we shall ask with a faith that banishes all doubt: *"Ask in faith, nothing wavering."*

Shall we obtain whatever we ask? The words: *You shall ask whatever you will,* seem a little excessive, since they imply a promise that anything at all we ask, even temporal favors if we so will, will be given us. The word *whatever* should be understood in a Christian sense and as interpreted by faith, meaning *whatever* may be for the weal of our souls and the glory of God, since the promise is naturally linked with what precedes: "If My words abide in you," which is equivalent to saying, "if My words and the faith you have received be your rule and guide in praying."

My friends, these words: *"Ask whatever you will and it shall be done unto you,"* are very comforting. Let us love prayer for it is, as St. Augustine says, the key to heaven and

the tie that binds us to heaven, and it is also the most comforting solace for those who are still in conflict and still suffering on this miserable earth.

HOMILY XI

Mass of Many Martyrs in Paschal Time

Sancti Tuo, ETC.

BLESSED be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy hath regenerated us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that can not fade, reserved in Heaven for you. Who, by the power of God, are kept by faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations: That the trial of your faith (much more precious than gold which is tried by the fire) may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ.—*1 Peter* i. 3–7.

THIS Letter was written by St. Peter in Rome, as is clear from the closing lines of it, about the sixteenth year of our era and six years before his death. It is especially addressed to Christians, who had originally been

Hebrews, many of whom were scattered through the provinces of Asia Minor, named by the apostle in the first verse; however, it is not to be supposed that the Christians who had been converted from Paganism are not included in its scope, since it is undoubtedly true that many portions of it have reference to them also.

This Letter of the Prince of the apostles is singularly like those of St. Paul; for, considering the sweep of the style, the ideas touched upon and developed, and its character as a whole, it might be taken for a production of the Apostle to the Gentiles. Putting aside these and other not uninteresting observations, let us go at once to the explanation.

Like St. Paul, St. Peter begins his Letter by naming in the first two verses those to whom it is addressed and sending them a fraternal salutation. In the third verse, which is the beginning of the passage read to you, he enters upon his subject, and I may be permitted to say that he enters upon it in a manner elevated, emphatic, and full of holy enthusiasm: "*Blessed,*" he says, "*be God the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.*" A strange coincidence! These words, with which St. Peter commences his Letter, are absolutely identical with the opening passage of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. The same faith that en-

lightened, and the same charity that warmed these two great souls, inspired their minds and flooded their hearts with the same thoughts and sentiments, and caused the same words to fall from their pens. The whole soul of the Prince of the apostles was overflowing with faith and hope and love; he could think of nothing, could see nothing except God and Jesus Christ; the infinite benefits that are being continuously lavished on men, that encompass them on every side, rose to his mind and in an impulse of gratitude he cried out: "*Blessed be God the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.*" And why did Peter wish that his neophytes should raise their minds and hearts to God the Father? Would it not have been enough for him simply to say: "Blessed be Our Lord Jesus Christ"? Is it not Jesus Christ, our Saviour, through whom and from whom we receive every spiritual gift? Yes, who can doubt it? But the holy apostle wished, by going up to the primary fountain, to the root, to the First Person of the august Trinity, to make us understand that from Him come all good things; that God the Father is the first source of all celestial gifts; that He gives Himself wholly to His Son, begotten before all time; that together with His Son He gives Himself wholly to the Holy Spirit; and that together with the Word or His Son, and the Holy Spirit, all the

fulness of spiritual treasures is poured out on the holy and blessed Humanity assumed by His Son, and is thence communicated to all men.

This expression of St. Peter is a hearty cry of thanksgiving to the Father of light, to Him from whom all good things come, and it should also be the cry that goes forth most frequently from our hearts: *"Blessed be God and the Father of Jesus Christ."* As we are ceaselessly receiving benefits of every sort from God, so should we ceaselessly, in as far as possible, pour out our thanks to Him; and what words can better express our thanks than these: *"Blessed be God and the Father of Jesus Christ"?* They call up to our minds two fundamental mysteries of faith, and especially that mystery of love, the Incarnation, which is the foundation of our hope.

"Who (the Father) *according to His great mercy hath regenerated us."* St. Paul writing to the Corinthians[1] says that God is *the Father,* or fountain, *of mercies,* and St. Peter here says that *"He regenerated us according to His great mercy."* The sense and the wording are almost the same. God is as just as He is merciful, because His perfections are all necessarily equal; why, then, does the language of Holy Writ seem to imply that the mercy of

[1] 2 Cor. i. 1–3.

God has the precedence and overmasters His justice? How is this? I repeat, in God all perfections are infinite, and hence His justice and mercy are equal; but in the present order of things here on earth He prefers to exercise His mercy, either because this is more in keeping with the weakness and misery of man; or because divine justice was fully visited on the adorable Person of Jesus Christ, thus exempting us from it; or finally because in the life to come justice will have the field all to itself. This present time is a time of mercy, and mercy now is as great as will be justice in eternity. It is indeed a comforting thought, my friends, that our God is a God of mercy: *The Father of mercies;* and that in His works and in the government of human affairs He is ruled not only by His mercy, but by His great mercy: *According to His great mercy. Great mercy,* because it is born of His love, which is infinite; *great,* because of it He has given us His own Son; *great,* because it has no limits either as to time, place, person, or the reward He offers, which is heaven, aye, His very Self.[1]

The greatness of the divine mercy is manifest first of all in His having regenerated us:

1 "Totum quidquid sum, Domine, de misericordia tua est; ut enim essem, quid feci? Ut essem, qui te invocarem, quid egi? Quia ergo nemo te in misericordia largior, a quo accepi ut essem, ab illo accepi ut bonus essem, Deus meus, misericordia mea. (S. Augustinus, in Psal. lviii.)

He hath regenerated us. We are the children of Adam inasmuch as we owe our existence to natural generation, and hence we are men, sinful men, subject to all the miseries of life and to death; next, we are through the grace of holy Baptism children of God, and this birth is what is called in Holy Writ *regeneration,* or second generation. By the first generation we receive our natural life; the second deposits in us a new element, a new germ of divine life, which is little by little developed by instruction, prayer, the sacraments, and by all those aids by which Christian piety is nourished and fostered. By this regeneration we acquire the image of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, as by the first generation we acquired the image of the first man, Adam.

God the Father, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, by virtue of Baptism put into us the second man, the new man, the man of grace, and thus caused to spring up within us the living, certain, operative, and invincible hope of everlasting life: "*Hath regenerated us unto a lively hope.*" And upon what foundation does this firm and unshaken hope of everlasting life rest? On the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our hope of everlasting life is a most firm hope, because Jesus Christ, our Head, has risen, not alone for His own sake but for ours, we being His members,

and His victory over death is our victory also. Jesus Christ by His death suffered for our sakes, paid our debt and slew death, and rising from the grave gave us a pledge and a right to a future resurrection, since what takes place in the Head must also take place in the members.

God the Father through Jesus Christ regenerated us unto a living hope of everlasting life. What is meant by everlasting life? St. Peter and also St. Paul call everlasting life, or heaven, a heritage, and rightly. The idea of a heritage evokes in our minds the idea of a father who gives the heritage, and of a son who receives it. Now God is truly our Father by adoption and we are truly His sons by adoption. Again, the idea of an inheritance carries with it another idea, namely, that the good enjoyed is ever the same for both father and son, and our happiness in heaven will, in due measure, be that of the Father Himself.

St. Peter, in naming the heavenly inheritance to which we are looking forward, defines and describes it as *"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that can not fade."* Inheritances are dissipated in time and wasted; thus it was with the Land of Promise, the inheritance of the Hebrews; so also is it with the ordinary inheritances of property and land; they are lost either through death or by vio-

lence, and the dishonest arts of wicked men, and of this we have examples daily under our own eyes. The inheritance of heaven will be incorruptible or immortal, as is the soul which possesses it, and it will be shared in by all, though not in equal measure.[1]

This heritage is also said to be *undefiled* or *uncontaminated.* I think that St. Peter alludes in this place to the depraved teachings of certain heretics, who began to make their appearance here and there and who may be regarded as the forerunners of the Mohammedans. Their religion was a religion of enjoyment; they were given over to the pleasures of sense and they fashioned to themselves a heaven worthy of such men, where all the baser appetites and passions could be gratified. "No," says St. Peter, "our heritage, which we hope to possess in heaven, is undefiled, clean, without blemish and worthy of the sons of God; there are there no sensual, vulgar, earthly passions; everything is pure and heavenly; there is a perfect knowledge of all truth, a holy love of God and of our brethren, and the endless delights of the angels."

Again: this heritage *can not fade,* it is *un-*

[1] "Haereditas nostra non imminuitur copia possessorum, non fit angustior numerositate cohaeredum: sed tanto est multis, quanto paucis; tanto singulis, quanto omnibus; cum in creata haereditate longe aliud eveniat." (S. August. in Psal. cixl, apud A Lapide.)

changeable. Everything on this earth, the best and the most precious, alters and changes; leaf and flower and fruit, which are so pleasing to the eye and grateful to the taste, after a little while wither away and rot; not so the crown of heaven, the inheritance that we look forward to; it is unchangeable, ever beautiful and unaffected by the passage of time: *That can not fade.* An inheritance incorruptible by nature, undefiled or spotless in quality, that *can not fade* with the passing of ages.

This great and precious heritage *is reserved for you in heaven,* adds St. Peter, as if commenting on the words of Christ: "Come ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world"; a kingdom, a crown, an inheritance, a reward, all mean the same thing, namely, everlasting life, which God has promised and which He will give after this life to the just. Note the words *for you,* by which St. Peter recalls to his beloved children benefits already received and those that await them beyond the grave. "To you, to you," St. Peter seems to cry out, "is reserved this great and glorious inheritance, to you, the sons of a blessed Father, but yet not without your co-operation. To attain it you are borne up by the power of God, and you are led on by faith to the acquisition of your salvation. Of yourselves alone, of your

own strength you will be wholly unequal to such a task, but God the all-powerful will be with you: *By the power of God.* He will guard you by the faith He has poured into your soul. It will show you at every instant what you are to do and what you are to avoid, and it will keep before you your last end, everlasting life: *Who are kept by faith unto salvation.*" Interpreters very properly observe that the words "*You who are kept*" have here a special meaning, akin to that of the Psalm: "Except the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it."[1] God is represented as a sentry, who watches over and defends each of us; day and night His loving eyes are ever fixed upon us; as soon as the enemy makes a move to harm us He gives the alarm through the voice of faith that speaks in our conscience: *By faith,* and He encourages and urges us to combat and repel him, thus assuring our salvation: *Unto salvation.*

The word *faith,* as used here by St. Peter, signifies the truths of faith in their amplitude. These form the norm of our thoughts, and the rule of our conduct; when the mind is quickened by these truths of faith, our will is stirred and feels itself impelled and moved to translate them into deeds and to follow their guidance.

[1] cxxvi. 1.

Strengthened by these truths of faith we go forth to meet our enemies, no matter who they may be or of what kind; we do not turn back at the sight of obstacles, nor do we fear any sacrifices; our thoughts and desires are fixed on one thing, and one thing alone, our eternal salvation. Borne up by these truths of faith all the saints stood steadfast; the martyrs despised everything, even life and honor, came triumphant out of the most trying ordeals, and carried off the palm of victory. This is why it is said in Holy Writ that it is faith that makes us victorious over the world: *"This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith,"* and that faith is a shield with which to turn aside the fiery darts of the wicked one: *In all things taking the shield of faith, whereby you may be able to extinguish the fiery darts of the most wicked one.* Faith, when made real by works, leads us on to salvation, or sanctification; this is to be accomplished in time and will be made manifest on the last day.

I have often said, and it is well to repeat it here, that sanctification is wrought upon this earth; it is a work which each one must do in his own soul; which for the most part is hidden from the eyes of men and even from oneself, since no one knows to a certainty whether he is worthy of love or hatred, whether he is in

the grace of God or not. The character of his work will appear at the moment of death, when the soul, putting off the vesture of flesh and blood, will stand forth in its nakedness, clothed with divine light; then will be revealed his true state, then in the twinkling of an eye will take place his judgment, and with the judgment his lot for eternity.

The expression employed here by St. Peter, "*The salvation that will be revealed in the last time,*" may mean the moment of death, as well as the last judgment, though according to Scripture usage it seems the phrase, *In the last time,* refers especially to the supreme judgment, since this is really *the last time,* the end of all time. Still it matters little whether it be understood as referring to the moment of death or to the last judgment, since the two are substantially the same.

Let us go on with the text: "*Wherein you shall greatly rejoice if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations.*" Everything that I have thus far said should, if you consider the matter well, be a joy to you; you should rejoice that through the divine mercy you have received a new birth; you should rejoice in the hope of attaining the heritage laid up for you in heaven, and in the special care God takes of you in order that you may attain salvation, which will be revealed on

the day of judgment. All this should be a cause of rejoicing to you, because of the good that comes of it.

Still, there naturally arose to the mind of St. Peter and of his readers the memory and the sight of the many sufferings they endured, and St. Peter anticipating the difficulty writes: "*Although for a little time you must be made sorrowful in divers temptations.*" Yes, this is the sense of the words used; yes, I know that you must suffer to gain that blessed heritage; but it is a trifle and lasts only a short time: *Now, for a little time.* We seem to be listening to the apostle St. Paul, who uses substantially the same phrase: "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."[1] The little we suffer, whether regarded in itself or in its duration, is contrasted with the greatness of our joy, both in itself and in its duration, which is eternal; then he tells us that all, both good and bad, must necessarily suffer, that this is an inexorable law. Is it not, then, the part of wisdom to convert our sufferings into eternal joy, since we can not prevent them? St. Augustine says that, if it were necessary, we should be willing to toil eternally to gain eternal happiness. Shall, then, courage fail us

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Christians to face and bear up against the trifling and fleeting sufferings of this present life? Let us be up and doing, the Prince of the apostles seems to say; if we must endure trial and affliction, let us not lose heart; the recompense that we look forward to is incomparably greater; it is God Himself.

What are these afflictions, after all? Why does God visit them upon us? Why does He permit them? To put our faith to the test. How is gold, the most precious of metals, so laboriously sought by man, proved? How is it purged and refined? By fire. In the fire it casts off all dross, acquires its natural luster and ductibility, and becomes pure and perfect. So also is our faith proved by trial and suffering; it casts off its imperfections, waxes strong, and acquires merit in the measure in which it is tried. It constrains us to fear for ourselves and to have recourse to God in prayer; it kindles our hope and inflames our charity: "*That your faith may be much more precious than gold which is tried by the fire.*" This faith, tried by affliction, as gold is tried by fire, will on the last day, when Christ will manifest Himself, be found worthy of praise, glory, and honor.

And here our commentary ends. How many sublime truths has the apostle touched upon in these few sentences! It is worth while sum-

ming them up that they may remain impressed on the memory. He refers to the mystery of the most blessed Trinity by mentioning the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ; he touches upon the work of our regeneration, our new birth, by calling to mind the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; he speaks of the hope we have of life eternal, and how this is the fruit of God's loving watchfulness over us; and finally he bids us rejoice even in our afflictions, because these test and purify our faith, in preparation for the day of judgment.

What a number of truths in five short verses.[1]

[1] The Homily on the Gospel of this Mass is omitted, because it has been already explained in the preceding Mass.

HOMILY XII

Mass of Many Martyrs

Intret in Conspectu Tuo, etc.

The souls of the just are in the hand of God and the torment of death shall not touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die; and their departure was taken for misery; and their going away from us, for utter destruction: but they are in peace. And though in the sight of men they suffered torments, their hope is full of immortality. Afflicted in few things, in many they shall be rewarded: because God hath tried them, and found them worthy of Himself. As gold in the furnace He hath proved them, and as a victim of a holocaust He hath received them, and in time there shall be respect had to them. The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds. They shall judge nations, and rule over peoples, and their Lord shall reign forever.—*Wis.* iii. 1–8.

This passage which the Church appoints to be read to-day in the Mass of Many Martyrs is taken from the beginning of the third

chapter of the Book of Wisdom. It is forcible, eloquent, and simple in expression, precise, dignified and brilliant, recalling in this respect the language of the Psalms and of the Prophets.

The sacred writer, after having in the chapter immediately preceding shown the foolishness of the wicked, who say that death is the end of all things, that, therefore, we should enjoy ourselves while yet there is time, and that, if the just give annoyance by their life and teachings, they should be gotten rid of at whatever cost, speaks of the immortality of the soul and goes on to describe the happiness of the just, who after suffering for a brief time shall possess life eternal and every best gift.

And here begins the text, which as usual we shall proceed to explain. Its teachings answer admirably to the needs of our age and recall to our minds one of those fundamental truths, which are the basis, not of faith alone, but also of reason and natural justice, which seem to be fading from the minds of men, and which should be preserved, kept alive, and made effective. It is marvelous, my friends, to reflect that the plain people, who can scarcely read or write, cling firmly to the great truth of the immortality of the soul, are conscious of it in their hearts, and can not understand how any one can doubt it; while learned men, on the contrary, men who boast of being

teachers, not only, alas, doubt it and regard it as an hypothesis, but prefer to think it a fable and a dream. It is an intellectual perversion, which in a Christian society would seem incredible, were we not ourselves daily witnesses of the fact. Let us go on to the explanation.

"The souls of the just are in the hands of God and the torment of death shall not touch them." Here the inspired writer seems to be apostrophizing the wicked who persecute the just. "Ye," he says, "that would have the soul die with the body, ye, that cruelly torture the just who serve God, be not deceived. Know ye and remember that the souls of these righteous men, the victims of your hatred and outrages, when separated from the body, do not cease to live. *They are in the hands of God."* That is, God takes them into His arms as a loving father embraces his sons on their return home from a far away country victorious over their enemies. God holds them in His hands, that is, He caresses them, defends them, rewards them, and makes them happy with His own happiness; He holds them in His hands, that is, He loves them; He looks upon them as His own conquest, He shields them from every danger; and who can ever snatch them from His hands?[1]

[1] The Scriptural phrase: "My soul is in my hands," means, "My soul is in continual danger of being lost"; so, on the

"And the torment of death shall not touch them." And will not the righteous, who fall into the hands of the wicked and are by them ill-used and outraged, feel their sufferings? Will God by a miracle make their bodies insensible to pain? And if so, whence will come their merit? Did not Jesus Christ Himself, the Prince of Martyrs, feel keenly His sufferings, so that He cried out: "My soul is sorrowful unto death"? No doubt, this is all true, and the just also keenly feel their sufferings, and, it may be, more acutely than others, but here it is said that *the torment of death shall not touch them,* which means that the just, being in the hands of God, enjoy supernatural consolations, that is, their sufferings are the less painful; or their pains are felt by the body, but not by the soul, the conscience being tranquil and serene; or they have no fear of everlasting death, which of all torments is the most cruel; or, finally, they are not harrowed with the agonizing thought that their soul shall die with their body. The last two senses likely express that of the divine phrase: *"And the torment of death shall not touch them."*

My friends, there will come a day, a moment,

contrary, the phrase: "My soul is in the hands of God," means, "My soul is safe and secure." Jesus Christ in dying said: "Into Thy hands do I commend My spirit." And in another place Christ, speaking of His sheep, says: "And no one can snatch them out of the hand of My Father."

that will be the last for each of us—the moment of death. If at that moment the light of reason is not extinguished and the voice of conscience is not hushed, if each faculty retains its force and vigor, what mortal anguish will come both upon the wicked man who believes, and upon the wicked man who does not believe, in a future life. The former will see himself face to face with an endless life of endless sorrow and pain, face to face with a death all the more terrible and appalling, because it is, as St. Bernard says, an ever-living death.[1] The latter sees before him only the eternal darkness of the grave, its nothingness, its eternal nothingness. And since nature rebels against nothingness, puts from it with all its power the very thought of it, has an invincible horror of it, and begs most piteously to live on; so does this wretched soul at the sight of the dark abyss, in which he is about to be swallowed up, grow excited, tremble, turn pale, toss to and fro, and experience an agony like to that which one about to be hanged experiences when he feels the fatal noose tightening about his neck. The just man, on the contrary, sees another, a blessed and never-ending life beyond the grave; he sees God beckoning him on and

1 "Horreo mortem vivacem. Horreo incidere in manus mortis viventis et vitae morientis. Haec est secunda mors quae nunquam peroccidit, sed semper occidit." (De Considerat., lib. 5.)

opening His arms to take him to His bosom; he forgets all things else, death has no fear for him and shall not touch him: *"The torment of death shall not touch him."*

And in truth, the sacred writer goes on: *"In the sight of the unwise they seem to die; and their departure was taken for a misery; and their going away from us for utter destruction; but they are in peace."* Death may be looked at with the eyes of sane reason and of faith, and it may be contemplated with the eyes of sense as the materialist and the epicurean view it, who hold that everything dies with the death of the body. The materialist, the epicurean, the man of sense, the carnal man, who hold that, as the body is dissolved, so also is the soul, are the unwise, the stupid, whom the sacred writer has in mind. According to them death is the end of all things, an irremediable misfortune, an irreparable calamity, and justly so. Let us fancy a father, a husband standing at the deathbed of a son, a daughter, a devoted and beloved wife; let us fancy again a son, a daughter, a wife standing by just as a tenderly loved father, a mother, a husband have breathed their last; they gather lovingly about their dear ones, now cold and lifeless in death, and relieve their grief by a flood of tears. Let us say that these survivors, now grieving and

lamenting over the bodies of those dear to them and hardly yet cold in death, have lost all faith and belong to that unfortunate class of men who say death is the uttermost term of life and in the grave all hope dies; which of us could describe the anguish, the desolation of heart, the agony of soul experienced by those wretched beings? Their cry would be: "We shall never see you again. We shall never again hear your voice. An eternal oblivion shall cover our tombs. We shall be as if we had not been. The winds shall scatter our ashes over the face of the wide earth. Good and bad, just and unjust, rapacious and charitable, grasping and generous, honest and dishonest, profligate and virtuous, all will be equal, the lot of all will be the same." Whose soul would not rise up in indignant protest against such a sentiment? Who does not bear down in the depths of his conscience a voice of protest against those fools who say that death is the end of all things, that man on leaving this earth is as a drop of water that is lost in the ocean, as a cloud that fades away in the fields of the firmament, as a breath that vanishes in the air, as a brand that is quenched forever. One must have lost the use of his intellect, must be destitute of all heart, of every sentiment of human dignity, of every idea of

virtue and vice, of justice and injustice, if he can look on while those dearest to him are being let down into the grave, and coldly say: "All is over, we shall never, never, see you again throughout all the cycles of the ages."

But if we look upon death with the eyes of sane reason and of faith, it will be to us the end of an exile, the return to our fatherland; it will be the abandonment of this vale of tears and sorrows and a return to the house of our fathers; the abandonment of this place of darkness to go to dwell in light eternal. Thither our fathers, kinsmen, and friends have gone before us, and from the shores of eternity they stretch out their arms to us, beckon to us, beg us to come to them and cast anchor in that tranquil port. The larger and better portion of our dear ones is there, and, instead of regretting our departure hence from this abode, we ought rather to feel impatient to be with them. "Death," said a Pagan, guided only by the light of reason, "is not the end of all things; it is a passage, a change of life, a guide conducting the souls of the virtuous to heaven." [1] "Death," says St. Cyprian, "is necessary to reach eternal life; death is not a departure, it is a passage; it is the door to life, and the pres-

[1] "Mors non est interitus omnia tollens atque delens, sed quaedam quasi migratio, commutatioque vitae, quae in claris viris et feminis dux in caelum esse solet." (Cicero, Tusc. lib. i.)

ent life should more properly be called a death, and its end the beginning of life."[1]

The Biblical phrase: *The just are in peace,* may seem a little strange. Why is it not said: "They see God—they are happy with Him—they have received their reward," or some similar expression? Why describe them by these modest words: *They are in peace?* In a hundred phrases in Sacred Writ and especially in the New Testament these vivid and strong expressions are to be met with, and they throw a light on the one in the text, which in matter of fact includes every good, since *to be in peace* means to be supremely happy.

Moreover, it is to be noted that the Book of Wisdom belongs to the Old Covenant, when, and until the entrance of Christ into heaven, the just were not admitted to the beatific vision, nor did they enter into heaven properly so called; they abode in *the bosom of Abraham,* or in the place, whatever may have been its character, where Abraham and all the just were, who died before the coming of Jesus Christ. It was an abode of peace, where they lived joyful and happy, in the certainty of salvation and

[1] "Nec potest vita aeterna succedere nisi hinc contigerit emigrare; non est exitus iste, sed transitus." (S. Cyprianus, De mortal.)

"Haud scio an vita nostra mors potius dicenda sit, et mors e contra vita nostra nuncupanda sit." (S. Gregorius Naz. Orat. de vita humana.)

of the coming of the divine Redeemer, but they were not yet glorified, nor were they dwelling in the blessedness of heaven. This, I think, is why the inspired author used these words: *They are in peace.*

The next verse repeats the same truth in another form: "*And though in the sight of man they suffered torments, their hope is full of immortality.*" These words can not be understood as applicable to those who already possess eternal glory, for once a good is possessed the hope of possessing it necessarily ceases. They should be understood as referring to those who still suffer and struggle, but have their eyes fixed on the reward they hope for and that will not fail them; or rather, and possibly in a truer sense, to those just of the Old Law, who in limbo, or in the bosom of Abraham, looked forward to the redemption of Christ and were living in hope.

"*Afflicted in a few things, in many they shall be well rewarded.*" This is a truth that is found stated in many places in Holy Writ, to which I have very often had occasion to refer, and which need not be dwelt on here. The evils, sorrows, and persecutions that the just suffer here on earth for love of God are not to be compared with the joys of heaven, either in their intrinsic excellence, in their duration, or in any other respect.

"Because God hath tried them and found them worthy of Himself." And this also is a truth not unfamiliar to you, namely, that trial, conflict, and toil, in a word, that merit, must go before the crown and the reward; only by trial are we proved to be worthy disciples of such a Leader.

And note well the nature of the trial or proof to which God subjects us. *"As gold in the furnace hath He proved them."* St. Augustine thus explains this passage or image of the Book of Wisdom: "Tribulation comes upon me and with it patience and my cleansing. Is gold lustrous in the furnace of the artificer? It will be brilliant in the necklace or in the ornament, but first it must pass through the furnace and be purged of its dross, in order that it may be lustrous. The furnace is here and so also is the fuel, the gold and the fire; the goldsmith blows into the furnace, the fuel burns and the gold is purified. The fuel is converted into ashes and the gold is purged of its foreign matter. The world is the furnace, the wicked are the fuel, the just are the gold, the suffering is the fire, and God is the goldsmith. Whatever the goldsmith wills, that I do; wherever He places me, there I stay and suffer; it is mine to suffer, it is His to cleanse me. When the fuel is set aflame to burn me, it is reduced to ashes, and

I am cleansed of my dross."[1] Thus in the same fire gold is cleansed and made lustrous and the fuel is burned; so also the same suffering, the same trial, destroys the wicked and sanctifies the just, making them worthy a place in heaven.

"*These just,*" it is said, "*God has received as a victim of a holocaust.*" Among the Hebrews there were three kinds of sacrifice; the first was said to be offered for sin, or for any transgression of the Law; the second was called a pacific sacrifice or victim, and was offered for the salvation of any one; in these two sacrifices the victim was not burned; the third was called a *holocaust,* and the victim was burned on the altar. This last was regarded as the most perfect, since the victim was consumed in God's honor. Now men, who suffer for love of God, and particularly the martyrs, who pour out their blood and give their lives for Him, are as a holocaust, a sacrifice by excellence, in His presence.

And here rises a difficulty which it may be well to examine and solve. The Sacred Text says that God receives the saints and martyrs as a holocaust. Does God then rejoice in the sufferings of His servants? Does He delight in the torments of the martyrs? Do the groans which the agonies of pain wrest

[1] St. Augustine, Psalm lxi.

from their hearts, and the sight of blood flowing from their wounds, give Him joy? Such a thing would be abominable in man, and infinitely more so in God. In what sense, then, is it said that God receives the pains and torments of the saints and martyrs as a holocaust, and, as we read in another passage, as an odor of sweetness?

Here is the answer. No, God does not delight in the pains, sufferings, and death endured for Him by the saints and martyrs, but in the constancy and fortitude, generosity and love, of which they are an incontestable proof. This is the sacrifice, this the holocaust that goes up to Him as an odor of sweetness. Many of you are fathers and mothers; say that your sons to obey you, or to do what is pleasing to you, should undertake an arduous task, should suffer, endanger, aye, lose their lives for your sakes. Surely you would not rejoice in their sufferings, rather you would suffer with them, but you would rejoice, and be justly proud and honored in the proof they gave of their love for you; and so also does God deal with His servants and martyrs; He accepts them as a most pleasing holocaust, and their love goes up to Him as sweet-smelling incense and gladdens His heart. In His own time, at death, at the day of judgment, He will give them their own reward, restoring to

them their bodies, radiant with eternal youth and filled with an immortal and blessed life: *"And in time there shall be respect had to them."*

The inspired author goes on to say: *"The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds."* The sacred writers, to give us an idea of the glory and happiness of the saints, find it necessary to use images that appeal to the senses, and without the latter we cannot rise to a conception of the former. Hence light, harmony, sound, songs, fragrance, exquisite food, creature beauty, are all used as images to bring home to us the delights, the glory, and the everlasting blessedness of the elect. The Gospel tells us that the just shall shine like stars, like the sun; such is the beauty, such the glory that awaits them. This idea of light, so frequently employed in the pages of Holy Writ to give an idea of heavenly glory, reappears here, in a more modest form, but in one intelligible to all. Set fire to a field of dry reeds or stubble, and the whole field is at once enveloped in a devouring flame; there is a continuous crackling and noise, showers of sparks are blown hither and thither; they cross and recross one another, they part and come together; these sparks represent the saints, and particularly the martyrs, who are exulting and glad to be

with God, and who are revealing the glory with which they are flooded.

This is not all; the description goes on: "*They* (the just) *shall judge nations, and rule over peoples, and their Lord shall reign forever.*" Here to bring out more fully the glory of the just three statements are made. First, *they shall judge nations.* Where? Here on earth where they were reviled and put to the severest trials. When? On the final day—the day of judgment. How? Will they examine the wicked, reason with them, and convince them of their iniquitous deeds? No; simply by showing themselves in the infinite light of truth judgment will be done, and the sentence pronounced and executed. Jesus Christ speaks in the Gospel of this judgment to be executed by the saints upon the impious, notably where He says to the apostles: "You shall sit upon twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel." Next, *they shall rule over peoples,* that is, they shall rule over the perverse and the stubborn and on that great day of the last judgment they shall condemn them and put them to shame by unveiling their crimes and injustice. Third, *and their Lord shall reign forever.* There is a twofold kingdom of God, the one on earth, or the Church, where there is suffering, and conflict, and prayer; the other the term, the goal of the former, in heaven, where God is seen face to

face and all is perfect felicity. In the latter kingdom, of which there will never be an end, God reigns by love, as a Father in the midst of His children and pours out perennially on all about Him torrents of love and gladness, inebriating all with His ineffable delights.

My friends, may we all some day cross the threshold of this blessed kingdom, where God will wipe our eyes dry of tears, where death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow, and where we shall be forever His people and He our God dwelling with us.[1]

[1] Apoc. xxi. 3–4.

HOMILY XIII

Mass of Many Martyrs

And when you shall hear of wars and seditions, be not terrified: these things must first come to pass; but the end is not yet presently. Then He said to them: nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there shall be great earthquakes in divers places, and pestilences, and famines, and terrors from heaven; and there shall be great signs. But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into prisons, dragging you before kings and governors, for My name's sake. And it shall happen unto you for a testimony. Lay it up therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before how you shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay. And you shall be betrayed by your parents and brethren, and kinsmen and friends; and some of you they will put to death. And you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake. But a hair of your head shall not perish.

In your patience you shall possess your souls.—*Luke* xxi. 9–19.

IT WAS the Tuesday, or possibly the Wednesday, before the passion and death of Jesus Christ and He was near the door of the Temple surrounded by His apostles. There was a great multitude going into the Temple and coming out, and the wealthy, as they passed, ostentatiously cast rich gifts into the treasury, and a poor widow cast in two brass mites. Jesus, observing this, said to His apostles that the widow had cast in more than the wealthy, for they gave of their abundance and she of her want. Then one of the apostles remarked upon the splendor and the marvelous richness of the Temple, whereupon Jesus foretold its destruction and the end of the world; and replying to their questions, referred to the signs that would precede the catastrophe, plainly warned them of what they were to expect, and assured them that they might confidently count upon His aid. This is the subject treated in the Gospel just read to you and also of my explanation.

First of all, my friends, let me make an observation that ought not to be omitted and that I think worthy your consideration. It is the vigil of the death of Jesus—and such a death! He sees it before Him. He contemplates it in all its horror, and the agonies of heart He must

have suffered none can ever know but Himself. And yet He speaks with the freedom and cheerfulness of one who sees opening upon Him the most joyful prospect. He speaks not of Himself nor of the awful catastrophe that was about to overtake Him; He seems forgetful of Himself, thinks only of the severe trials that await His apostles, and gives them all the necessary admonitions. In His words, which are prophecies of events soon to happen, there is not a shadow of doubt, uncertainty, or hesitancy; there is not an ambiguous phrase; language more precise, confident, and clean-cut than that used by Him can not be imagined; one should say that He is speaking of things that have already taken place, aye, of things that are under the eyes of all and that all can see; and in listening to Him one would be forced to conclude that he is listening to the arbiter of the future, to the Son of God. After warning His apostles against seducers, who before the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple would arise here and there, proclaiming themselves the Messias, He says: *And when you shall hear of wars and seditions, be not terrified;* these, as we read in St. Matthew, are but the beginnings of evil, but you must not on that account be disturbed or affrighted. It is, then, clear from these words of Christ that wars and seditions were to precede the awful slaughter and destruction of

Jerusalem. The historian Josephus, the Hebrew, an eye-witness and participant in the events he narrates, and, being a Hebrew, above all suspicion, in his works, "*Wars of the Jews,*" and "*Antiquities of the Jews,*" has left us a remarkable confirmation of the Gospel narrative. He tells us of the tumults, uprisings, and ferocious conflicts that took place in Palestine, previous to the final destruction, about the year 36 after the death of Christ. The Jews arose and exterminated the Roman legions and all who sided with the Roman emperor; then the neighboring peoples, the Syrians, Egyptians, and Phenicians, joined the Romans and, under the leadership first of Vespasian and then of his son Titus, fell upon the Jews, slaughtering them without mercy wherever found, and, gradually closing about them, shut them up in Jerusalem. These uprisings, seditions, and conflicts lasted through some years and were, as the Gospel says, *the beginnings of sorrows.* "*These things,*" Christ says, "*must first come to pass, but the end is not yet,* and hence be not terrified on witnessing them, but prepare for evils incomparably greater."

Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. This prophecy was first verified in Judea and in the neighboring countries, where all flew to arms, some siding with the Jews and some with the Romans.

"And there shall be not only uprisings and battles," says Christ, "there *shall also be great earthquakes in divers places*"; and we learn from profane history that at this period there were many violent earthquakes which desolated whole tracts of country. Christ goes on: "*And there shall be pestilences and famines.*" Josephus Flavius makes no mention of pestilences, but we know that these were nearly always the accompaniments of war in ancient times, and that they constantly lurk in those regions where the heat is unbearable and very often fatal. Famine, which goes side by side with war and pestilence, was at that time a terrible scourge to Judea. This we know from the Acts of the Apostles [1] and from Josephus Flavius and also from St. Paul, who directed that collections should be taken up in the churches of Greece and Macedonia in aid of the famishing in Judea, and he himself was the bearer of these contributions of Christian charity. Wars, uprisings, earthquakes, pestilence, and famine! How many and how terrible are the scourges foretold

[1] A Lapide in his commentary on St. Matthew, chapter xxiv, verse 7, enumerates seven facts or signs as among *the terrors from heaven and great signs.* He quotes Eusebius and Josephus Flavius, historians worthy of credence. It does not seem necessary to enumerate them in the Homily; any one who wishes to know them may go to the sources indicated. They are comets, apparitions of armed bands fighting in the heavens, the forcing open of the oriental bronze doors, mysterious cries in the Temple and in the Holy of Holies, etc., etc.

by Christ as coming upon that wretched people, and history, both sacred and profane, bears witness that the prophecy was verified to the letter. But Christ foretells something more appalling still. *"There shall also be terrors from heaven and great signs."* It seems that allusion is here made to the terrible signs that appeared in the heavens, shortly before the fall of Jerusalem, and to the extraordinary things that took place in the city and in the Temple itself, filling all the people with awe and terror.[1] God willed that all these things should come to pass before the great catastrophe, and all the more in order that, seeing them, the people might repent and avert from themselves the frightful scourge, and that the apostles and the Christians might all make provision for themselves by timely flight, which they did by withdrawing to the other side of the Jordan. This is an absolute proof that the prophecy of Christ, not only preceded the fall of Jerusalem, but that the prophecy was announced in the clearest possible terms.

Here Our Saviour stops for a moment, then turning to His apostles, who had gathered about Him silent and appalled, and looking intently at Him, He goes on: *"But before all these things they will lay their hands on you, and persecute you."* Here is another most manifest prophecy, for as a matter of fact before all these signs

[1] xi. 28.

had taken place in the heavens, all the apostles were harassed in every conceivable way, they were tortured, imprisoned, banished, and dragged before assemblies, kings, and rulers. And for what crime? Solely *"for My name's sake,"* because they were the disciples of Christ and the preachers of His Gospel.

From the Acts and from the Letters of the Apostles we know that all of the apostles, except St. John, were harried in a thousand ways and put to death before the destruction of Jerusalem. The prophecy of Christ was fulfilled to the letter, even to the exact time, which was precisely determined.

And here let me ask you to weigh these words of Jesus Christ, *"for My name's sake."* It is not by suffering alone, no matter how severe that suffering may be, that we gain merit and become dear to God; even the wicked, even murderers and traitors, suffer and suffer excruciatingly, and at times even sacrifice their lives. But what does their suffering avail? Can it open to them the gates of heaven? Can it make them pleasing and acceptable to God? Assuredly not. The suffering that sanctifies, merits heaven, and constitutes us friends of God, is the suffering we endure for truth and justice, the suffering we undergo for Jesus Christ and with Him, that is, the suffering that is like unto His: *For My name's sake.* If our suffering is

the consequence of our unbridled passions, of our self-love and imprudence, we must not expect a reward from God, who recompenses only those who suffer for Him.

"You," says Jesus Christ, "shall be dragged before tribunals, kings, and governors for My name's sake, and then what will you do? *It shall happen unto you for a testimony.* What does this mean? It means that God will allow you to to be constrained to appear before the hostile powers of this world in order that you may have an opportunity of bearing testimony to your faith and of professing it openly, and of thus boldly declaring yourselves My disciples."

Who is a Christian? He is and must be a witness to Christ everywhere and always. He must by word and act throughout his whole life illustrate in himself the teachings of Jesus Christ; he must be a living Gospel, so that any one looking upon a Christian and listening to him, if he be worthy of the name, will be virtually looking upon and listening to Jesus Christ. Our conduct must be an abiding testimony borne to Jesus Christ. Is our life in reality such? A martyr is pre-eminently a witness to Christ; a martyr seals his witness with his blood, and every Christian should seal his witness by making war on his passions, by prac-

tising virtue, and by bearing up against the trials and hardships of this life.

"And how," Jesus seems to ask the apostles, "how will you bear yourselves in the presence of the kings and rulers of this world, when you are cited before them for My name's sake? You are timid and ignorant, and you have neither defenders nor the means of securing them; they, on the contrary, are learned, versed in the sciences, eloquent and strong in the power with which they are invested. What will become of you, how will you be able to defend yourselves, to confess the truth and to bear witness for My name's sake?" A difficulty so obvious must naturally have come up in the minds of the apostles. Jesus anticipating this question replies: "*Lay it up in your hearts not to meditate before how you shall answer.*" He virtually says to them that the question of defending themselves and of replying to the interrogations of the judges is a matter of such trifling importance that it need not give them the least concern, and that they need not give it a thought.

But why so, especially in the case of men who are most timid and who but yesterday relinquished their oars, their fields, and their business? "Because," says Christ, "I will tell you how to reply; I will put what you are to say into

your mouths; *I will give you speech*[1] *and wisdom.*" Christ promises that He will give His apostles in those trying moments two things, speech and wisdom, that is, a clear and certain knowledge of the truth, as indicated by the word *wisdom;* and the strength and power to give expression to the truth, as indicated by the word *speech.* "Have no doubts or fears," Christ says, "do not even think what you are to say in the presence of the judges or how you are to say it; when the time comes I will give you a knowledge of what you are to say and I will put words into your mouth." And what manner of things shall we say? And what words shall we use? Things and words, *which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay.* This command of Christ not even to think of the answers they are to give and the formal promise that He would put the answers into their mouths and that these would be irresistible, would seem to exclude all effort on the part of the apostles, to open the way to fanaticism, and to lead them to tempt God by looking to Him for everything and requiring of Him a miracle. I believe that Jesus Christ, in using such strong language and bidding the apostles not so much as to consider in advance how they

[1] The Sacred Text says, *I will give a mouth,* a Hebrew form of expression that I have translated, *speech.* To us of the West this answers precisely in sense to the word *mouth,* which can hardly be translated.

were to defend themselves, did not mean absolutely to forbid them and His followers to use human means in their defence, and that this is a fact the example of the apostles, and notably of St. Paul, would seem to show. St. Paul in defending himself reminded his judges that he was a Roman citizen and even appealed from them to the Emperor Nero. On the other hand it is not in keeping with the designs of Divine Providence, nor with divine economy, to exclude human co-operation, where this is possible; quite the contrary, this seems to be uniformly required. Hence I am of the opinion that the purpose of Christ in using these words was to revive the faith of the apostles and disciples, to assure them of His aid and to encourage them, and that these expressions, so ample in their scope, ought to be understood in a sense similar to what He says elsewhere: "Behold the birds of the air, they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not of much more value than they? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they labor not, neither do they spin. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more you, O ye of little faith." As in these passages He did not mean and could not have meant that men should not sow their fields or labor in preparing their food and making

their clothes, so neither in that, which we are explaining, did He mean or could He have meant that the apostles and His followers were not to think of how to defend themselves; He only wished to say that they were not to be overworried about it, and that they were to put aside all fear in the confident assurance that He would most certainly come to their assistance.

The promise of Our Lord: "*I will give you speech and wisdom which all of your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay,*" was fully and perfectly fulfilled in the apostles themselves and in all those who in the course of ages were dragged before the tribunals of the earth to give an account of their faith. We know from the Gospel what sort of men the apostles and disciples of Christ were, that they were excessively timid, of limited intelligence, and of little or no education. But once the Holy Ghost had come upon them, behold them before the Great Council of the Jews, before judges and kings, proconsuls and assemblies, and in the presence of the multitude; what clearness of thought, what force of reasoning, what knowledge of Sacred Scripture, what power of speech, what intrepidity of mind! They put to silence even their judges, who fumed and blustered, but could not answer them. The discourses of Peter, Paul, and Stephen, abridgments of which St. Luke has preserved for us in the Acts, are

real masterpieces of divine science and popular eloquence, of heroic courage and exalted prudence, inconceivable in men such as they were.[1]

This divine Providence, promised by Christ, has ever been luminous in the Church. Take up the authentic Acts of the Martyrs, the biographies of martyrs and saints, and in our days the Annals of the Propaganda, and you will read of men and women, boys and girls, poor workmen and peasants, unlettered, without schooling, and naturally excessively timid, dragged before tribunals, interrogated concerning their faith, flattered by promises, frightened by threats of exile, confiscation and prison, torments and cruel death; you will be amazed at their answers, simple indeed, but clear and forcible; you will hear them fearlessly confessing their faith and defending it with the most effective arguments, wholly beyond their age and condition; you will see them suffering outrages and calumnies and facing death itself and the most atrocious of martyrdoms. As an example of what all suffered read St. Ambrose's account of St. Agnes and what the Acts of the Martyrs say of St. Perpetua and St. Felicitas, St. Quircus and St. Guilitta, of St. Theodotus and a thousand others, whom it would be impos-

[1] An exception must be made in the case of St. Paul, who was a man of splendid genius, unusual learning, and extraordinary strength of mind.

sible to name. The promise of Jesus Christ: "*Lay it up in your hearts not to meditate before how you shall answer, for I will give you speech and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay,*" has been kept from the days of the apostles to our own, even among the faithful of China, who only a few years ago amazed their judges and executioners by their answers.

Jesus Christ goes on to foretell the savage and almost incredible persecutions which the apostles and His disciples were to expect, not alone from the world, but also from those most dear to them. Listen and shudder: "*You shall be betrayed by your parents and brethren, and kinsmen and friends; and some of you they will put to death.*" All passions when not curbed may drive individuals and peoples to excesses and crimes that at times seem impossible. But there are two passions that beyond all others take possession of peoples (here I am not speaking of passions that take possession of individuals), swaying them and producing marvelous effects, good or bad, accordingly as they are rightly or wrongly directed,[1] namely, the

[1] The other passions such as gluttony, lust, covetousness, etc., may, speaking generally, be said to be passions of the individual, since the object to which they tend is individual, special, and personal, and rarely general or common. This needs no demonstration. The political and religious passions are not individual, or rarely so, since the object to which they tend is

political passion, and more especially the religious passion. To what acts of heroism, to what appalling crimes may not these two passions, that have their roots deep down in the human heart, drive a multitude. Read history and you will find undeniable proofs of such facts. There is no sentiment of the human heart as strong and as inextinguishable as the religious sentiment. When it is the outgrowth of true religion, when it is upright and enlightened, it produces apostles, martyrs, and saints, heroes of faith and charity, of chastity and of all virtues. When it is the outgrowth of a false religion, or even of a true religion, wrongly understood and erroneously applied, as has happened owing to local conditions at certain times and in certain countries, it becomes fanatical, ferocious, and cruel.[1] It is so fanatical, ferocious, and cruel that it sows the seeds of estrangement, hatred, and war among those who are bound to one another by the most sacred ties of friendship, gratitude, and blood.

ordinarily common to many, to a whole people, the fatherland and God being the two terms in which these two passions center. It may seem strange to some that I should speak of a religious passion, when it might be called a sentiment; but I prefer to call it a passion, inasmuch as it is the religious sentiment gone astray.

[1] Religious wars have ever been the most ferocious and sanguinary and have produced unexampled episodes of savagery and inhumanity. This is natural, for the most powerful sentiment of the human heart is that which rouses them to religious wars.

Consult the Annals of Church History and you will find there accounts of fathers, mothers, and husbands who became the accusers of their sons, wives, and friends, and had them dragged before the tribunals of tyrants and persecutors; and you will also find accounts of sons, wives, and kinsmen who betrayed their parents, husbands, and relatives into the hands of the executioner, thinking, as Christ says, that in so acting *they were doing a service to God.* The love of religion imposes on man, when necessary, the duty of giving up everything, of abandoning father and mother, of sacrificing even life and honor; and we have examples of this continually under our eyes. Now the love of a false religion, or of a true religion improperly understood, can also produce the most terrible effects; it can drive men to the most savage of acts, to fratricidal wars, to unspeakable betrayals, and all the while they believe they are doing what is acceptable to God and rendering a service to His religion. Jesus Christ foretold this, and what He foretold has taken place.

It is not to be wondered at then, my friends, that even we, while conscious of doing right, should be suspected, should be wrongly accused of favoring error, of being enemies of the truth, and untrustworthy friends of religion; and that we should see even pious men making war upon us, slandering us, and avoiding our company,

as if it were a peril. The same happened to St. Paul, to St. Cyril of Jerusalem, to St. John Chrysostom, to St. Ignatius Loyola, to St. Joseph Calisanctius, and to other saints who were imprisoned as heretics. It is indeed a most painful martyrdom to see those who are very dear to us making war upon us in the name of God and out of zeal for the truth; still this is what Jesus Christ foretold and it should not seem strange to us. When such trials come upon us let us find our satisfaction in the witness of a good conscience and commit our cause into the hands of God.

Our Saviour closes His enumeration of the terrible trials to which His apostles and followers would be subjected with this one, which embraces all the others and is of all the greatest: *"And you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake."* Note the words well: *You shall be hated by all.* Now we can not help loving and desiring to be loved; it is an instinct of our nature. The love of friends and acquaintances and of our fellow-men makes us joyful and contented; we feel honored by such love, it sustains and strengthens us, it mitigates our ills, it is the life of our life; a life that is not cheered and gladdened by the love of our brethren is a living death. Hence to have our brethren hate us wounds us to the heart, embitters our life, breaks our spirit, and crushes

us. And such is the trial that awaited the apostles, and this Christ foretold to them in language so harsh that it is terrifying: "*You shall be hated by all men for My name's sake.*" True the words *by all* must be understood in a large, and not in a rigorous sense, as meaning many or very many, since the Christians at least, not only could not have hated, but must have loved the apostles, and loved them dearly.

It is marvelous that these men, who never harmed any one, who did good to as many as possible, who were upright, virtuous, and holy and loved every one, who were ready to lay down their lives for the salvation of their brethren, and even of their enemies, should be hated and pursued to death. It is a mystery of blindness and wickedness, but it should cause no surprise. Was not Jesus Christ Himself hated? Did He not say that in Him was fulfilled the prediction of the Psalmist: *They hated Me without cause?* Could the apostles hope to be better treated than was their divine Master?

In these six verses Jesus Christ bluntly foretold to His apostles the fierce trials the world had in store for them; and here follows a sentence of unspeakable comfort, expressed in familiar but most forcible language: "*But a hair of your head shall not perish.*" Of all things that appertain to the human body, a hair of the head is the least of the least, so much so that

it does not share the life of the body and may be cut off without causing it pain. Christ then says: "Well and good; you will suffer, you will be tortured, you will be murdered for My sake; but you will get back again everything that men take from you; the hairs of your head are counted, and if a single one of them is snatched from you it will be restored in the resurrection to come." What language, and what a comfort for those who suffer and struggle.

Christ brings His discourse to an end with another magnificent sentence, which is an abridgment of everything He had said: "*In your patience you shall possess your souls*"; which is as much as to say: "By persevering unto the end and suffering all these afflictions and persecutions which I have foretold, *you will possess your souls,* that is, you will save them. This is the royal way to heaven trodden by Christ, by the apostles, and by all the saints, the way of patience, or what is the same thing, the way of the Cross; he who strives to go there by any other route deceives himself and shows that he will have no more to do with Christ, who said: "*In your patience you shall possess your souls.*"

HOMILY XIV

The Homily on the Epistle of the *Mass of Many Martyrs*—*Sapientiam Sanctorum*—is omitted, not only because it is very short, but because it is partially explained in Homily XVII of Vol. IV, where St. Paul quotes this passage of the fifth Chapter of the Book of Wisdom.

Mass of Many Martyrs

And Jesus coming down with them, stood in a plain place, and the company of His disciples, and a very great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and the seacoast both of Tyre and Sidon, who were come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases. And they that were troubled with unclean spirits, were cured. And all the multitude sought to touch Him, for virtue went out from Him, and healed all. And He, lifting up His eyes on His disciples, said: Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Be glad in that day and rejoice;

for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For according to these things did their fathers to the prophets.—*Luke* vi. 17–23.

ABOUT a year had passed since the divine Master had entered upon His public life; He had already wrought many miracles and His name was in the mouths of all, not only in Judea and Galilee, but also in the neighboring countries of the Gentiles; and He had gathered about Him a band of apostles, but had not yet definitely chosen them and constituted them as such. A certain evening He went up on a mountain [1] where He spent the night in prayer; when day dawned He called His disciples to Him and from them chose twelve, whom He designated apostles, and the evangelist names them one by one. Having made the choice Jesus came down with them from the mountain, and here begins the passage of the Gospel of to-day's Mass, which I am to explain to you.

"*And Jesus coming down with them stood in a plain place.*" According to St. Luke, as we shall soon see, Jesus on this plain delivered the discourse, known as the Sermon on the Mount. There would seem, then, to be here a contradiction between St. Luke and St. Mat-

[1] This mountain, if tradition may be trusted, is that which is called *Koronna Hottin*, in Galilee.

thew, for while the latter says that Jesus delivered the discourse on a mountain, the former says that He came down from the mountain and delivered the discourse on the plain. It may be, as some think, that Jesus delivered the discourse in two distinct places with the variations found in the two evangelists, and that each records the discourse with the respective differences as delivered in each place. Still I think it is nearer the truth to say that the discourse while narrated differently was spoken only once. Jesus came down from the mountain, when He had spent the night in prayer, and He halted at its base, where there was a small terrace or elevation, which as compared with the plain below, might be called a hill, or diminutive mountain.

Here there were gathered about Him a crowd of disciples and a multitude of people who had come from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the maritime cities of Tyre and Sidon. These Phenician cities, as is well known, were situated on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, distant one 80 and the other 120 kilometers from Galilee.

There were two motives, as the evangelist notes, that attracted so vast a multitude to Jesus from ports so distant: *Who were come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases;* they desired to know the teachings of Jesus

Christ and to be cured of their infirmities; the first motive was spiritual and most worthy, the second corporeal and less worthy. From this we learn that in our works we may propose to ourselves, together with the securing of the goods of the soul, also the securing of those of the body, provided we make the latter secondary and conditional upon their serving for the attainment of the former. We see that Jesus Christ healed bodies in order that He might then heal souls, and bestowed material benefits in order thus to excite in men the desire of seeking what was vastly more precious, namely, spiritual benefits and the knowledge of truth and salvation.

The Evangelist here notes the cure of some possessed by the evil spirit: *And they, that were troubled with unclean spirits, were cured.* These unhappy persons were, as is clear from the Gospel, quite numerous at the time of Christ, and it is significant that among the other sick and diseased healed by Him special mention is made of this unfortunate class. The Evangelist purposely makes particular mention of these, first because their state was of all others, the most miserable; next, because theirs was a twofold healing, that of the body and that of the soul; and finally because he would have us understand that Jesus Christ was come to free us from the tyrannous bondage of the devil.

And all the multitude sought to touch Him, for virtue went out from Him and healed all. From these words of the Sacred Text we learn that the healings wrought by Christ were countless and unrestricted, both as regards the persons healed and the character of their diseases; and that ordinarily their healings were effected by simply touching His adorable body or His clothing; and hence the Gospel says that an energy went out from Him most potent in its healing effects.

Some have imagined wild theories of, I know not what, electrical currents, going out from the body of Christ and producing marvelous natural effects in all those with whom they came in contact. It is not worth while examining and discussing such fancies and day-dreams; let those who believe in the tricks and frauds of animal magnetism give themselves to the consideration of them, if they are so inclined. In what sense is it said that healing virtue went out from the body of Jesus? It is not credible that the healing virtue went out from His body as fragrance goes out from the rose, or heat from red-hot iron, or an electric current from a voltaic pile; in that case it would have produced the same effects in all, while it is clear from the Gospel that these effects were produced only in those who had faith. It is hardly necessary to say that this healing power belonged to the Person

of the Word and was by this Person communicated to His most sacred humanity.

You will ask: Why was it communicated by means of material contact with Christ's body or clothing? The answer is easy and obvious. This contact was required in order that it might be made clear that the healing force came only from His body; if the miraculous effects had not in some way been linked to the words of Christ or to the touch of His body, how would men have been able to know with certainty that the healing came from Him?

This Gospel also foreshadows another truth that is constantly before our eyes. Who can doubt that God could, if He would, communicate His graces to us directly, without the aid of any agency or instrument whatsoever? And yet this He did not choose to do, and in His wisdom determined to communicate His truth to us by means of speech, and His grace by means of the sacraments, which are rites, or sensible signs of grace. As the mind acts upon the outward world through the body and the senses, so also does God give us His graces through the sacraments; and of this divine economy, established in the Church, He would have a representation in Jesus Christ, from whose most holy body issued forth a virtue powerful to heal all who touched Him with the touch of faith: *A virtue*

went out from Him and healed all, and all sought to touch Him.

And here is another truth which this fact teaches us. In order that the sick and infirm might be healed in touching the body of Christ it was necessary that they should have faith in Him; so also in receiving the sacraments, which confer grace, it is required not only that we have faith but also that we be properly prepared. Should we receive the sacraments without faith and without the necessary preparation, the sacraments would be still and always sacraments, and of themselves produce grace, but not for us. Let this truth remain firmly fixed in your souls.

But it is now time to listen to Jesus Christ, who looking toward His apostles, said: "*Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*" Before explaining these words it may be well to say that St. Luke records only four of the beatitudes, while St. Matthew records eight; this difference may be variously explained. It may be as I have said, that St. Luke records another discourse of Christ different from that recorded by St. Matthew, although the subject of each is the same; again, if the context be closely studied, it will be seen, as St. Ambrose observes, that the four beatitudes of St. Luke contain substantially the eight of St. Matthew; finally, it is well known, and there are many ex-

amples of it, that one evangelist in narrating the same things narrated by another, sometimes amplifies them and sometimes abridges them.

Moreover, note that St. Luke gives the first beatitude thus: "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God"; whereas St. Matthew gives it in these words: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The difference consists in this, that St. Luke omits the words *in spirit,* and puts the *kingdom of God* in place of the kingdom of heaven; in the former Christ is represented as addressing Himself directly to His hearers; in the latter He speaks to all in general and in the third person.

"Blessed are ye poor." Never before were such words heard upon this earth, and they are wholly contrary to the maxims of this world. The world cries out: "Blessed are the rich"; Jesus says: "Blessed are the poor." The two maxims are diametrically opposed one to the other and could not be more so. How are the poor blessed? And why? There are those who are poor in this world's goods, and these are the bulk of mankind; there are those who are poor in spirit, and these are they who like Job and Abraham, have not their hearts set upon the goods of this world; and there are those who are poor both in the goods of this world and in spirit; and these are they who for love of Jesus Christ have quitted the world and entered

religion. Of which class of poor is Jesus Christ here speaking? Undoubtedly of those who, destitute of the goods of fortune, do not complain of it, nor do they long for riches but commit themselves into the hands of God; He is speaking of those poor, who, though abounding in the goods of this world, do not love them with an ill-regulated love and value them only in so far as they are serviceable to themselves and to others; in short, He is speaking of those who are poor in spirit and of those who combine, with poverty of spirit, real poverty.[1]

And why are these happy? First of all they are happy because poverty, and above all voluntary poverty, extinguishes in them the desire for money, which, as the Apostle says, is the root of all evil; next, they are happy because poverty frees them from a thousand cares and anxieties that harass and burden the wealthy; thirdly, they are happy because in being detached from the world they live a life of greater freedom and are more ready to serve God; fourthly, they are happy because poverty banishes many dangers, such as pride, vanity, gluttony, sensuality, sloth, and luxury, the ordinary

[1] St. Augustine interprets the words: "Blessed are the poor in spirit" to mean *the humble*, as if Christ had said: "Blessed are they who are not puffed up with pride." The interpretation does not seem to me the right one, since Christ (St. Luke vi. 24) as if explaining His words, says: "Wo to you rich," etc. Hence He was speaking of wealth as contrasted with poverty.

accompaniments of wealth; finally, they are happy because poverty keeps them on the royal road to heaven, which is the cross and mortification, and because it makes them like the greatest saints, like the apostles and Jesus Christ Himself, who was the poorest of the poor, and therefore theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Ah, ye poor, who listen to me, be not envious of the rich; do not complain of being poor, love to be so, for Jesus Christ loved poverty. Bear in mind also that, although you are poor in this world's goods, you may be excluded from the number of the blessed if you open your hearts to the unbridled desire of wealth and not live resigned to the designs of Providence. Ye, who are neither rich nor poor, who live by the labor of your hands, thank God; be contented with your state. And ye rich, will you be shut out from the kingdom of Heaven? No, no, provided you are not the slaves, but the masters, of your wealth, provided you do not love it excessively and are poor in spirit, and provided you make a holy use of your money, giving work to the unemployed and aiding those who are in need and destitute. Heaven is open to the rich provided they make themselves poor, at least in spirit, and are generous to the suffering and the needy.

Here follows the second beatitude: "*Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled.*

Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh.'' These words of St. Luke seem to me to agree exactly with those of St. Matthew, who says: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill.'' It is ever the great law of contrast that the Evangelist is drawing out; those who suffer here below, of course for the love of God, shall rejoice in heaven; those who culpably rejoice here on earth shall after this present life suffer in the measure of their guilt.

It seems from the context that Jesus is speaking, in the passage quoted, of those who suffer material hunger and the privations of this life; these may be the result of our natural conditions, of our poverty, and also of our free will, which may subject the body to fasts and abstinences and to all manner of mortifications, always, however, as the Gospel says, with a view of acquiring virtue for justice' sake. Thus after calling the poor blessed and inculcating contempt of riches and detachment from them, the divine Master calls those blessed who restrain their appetite and chastise their body in any way they will. In exchange for hunger and thirst, endured for love of God, they will be filled in the life to come. Will they be filled with material food and drink equal in abundance to the lack of both in this life? God forbid.

This is indeed the dream of certain heretics, the paradise of the Mussulmans. How then? There is a food, and there is a drink of the body; the former appeases the hunger, the latter quenches the thirst of the body; but there is also a food, and there is also a drink of the soul; the former sates the hunger and the latter assuages the thirst of the soul. What then, my friends, is the food, what the drink of the soul? To see God and to possess Him, this is the food, this is the drink of the soul. Of this divine food and celestial drink Jesus spoke when He said to His apostles, "And I dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at My table, in My kingdom."[1] We shall nourish ourselves everlastingly with that food and slake our thirst without feeling dislike or satiety; we shall bathe forever in that torrent of pure and holy delights and we shall ever long to be immersed in it.

Let us go on to the next verse: "*Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.*" This beatitude is expressed in nearly the same words both by St. Luke and by St. Matthew, and by both it is placed last. It re-

[1] Luke xxii. 29, 30.

quires no explanation; it is a confirmation for the hundredth time of the truth that the enduring of sorrows and revilings for the name or for the sake of Jesus Christ should be our greatest joy. It should be our greatest joy because we then grow into His likeness; because it is a joy and delight to suffer for one we love; because in so suffering we have a token of God's love for us and a pledge of our eternal salvation. So great was the joy of the saints in suffering for Jesus Christ, that when asked what recompense they wished they replied: "None other than to suffer and be scorned for Thee, O Lord." The suffering itself was their reward. We read of the apostles that, going forth from the Council, where they had been barbarously scourged, they were overjoyed because they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus. What a contrast between the saints and us! We are unwilling to bear a single word, a stinging jest, a cutting sarcasm, any sort of affront for our faith; we at once complain loudly and demand reparation; and at times to escape a slight wound or mocking taunt like craven cowards we conceal our faith, leave off the practice of our religion, and God forefend that we do not even pretend to be unbelievers. No, no, my dear friends, far from us be such baseness of

soul; let us regard ourselves as fortunate and happy when the open, manly profession of our faith and the practice of our religion point us out as signs and targets for the hatred and abuse of the men of the world: *Blessed are ye when they shall speak evil against you and persecute you.*

"Be glad in that day and rejoice, for behold your reward is great in heaven." This is the last verse that remains to be examined. Jesus Christ, summing up everything He had said and addressing Himself to those who suffer, either from poverty, or hunger, or the trials of life, or from persecution and slander, bids them be strong, and not only to be resigned, but also to rejoice, to make merry and exult: *Be glad and rejoice,* because your reward is great and it is certain, a reward not enjoyed on earth but in heaven. What is the recompense? God Himself.

When, enlightened by faith, we call to mind that for the brief term we suffer here we shall be rewarded by being everlastingly joyful; that our reward is God Himself unveiled and contemplated in His ineffable beauty; that one day we shall exchange this earth, this vale of exile and tears, for a blessed abode in heaven; that we shall take up again this body, remade and overflowing with immortal life, how can we be other than flooded with joy, and how can

we help crying out with the great apostle: "I exceedingly abound in joy in all our tribulation; I yearn to be loosed from this body and to be with Christ."

HOMILY XV

Mass of Many Martyrs

Salus Autem Justorum

CALL to mind the former days, wherein, being illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions. And on the one hand indeed, by reproaches and tribulations, were made a gazing-stock; and on the other, became companions of them that were used in such sort. For you both had compassion on them that were in bonds, and took with joy the being stripped of your own goods, knowing that you have a better and a lasting substance. Do not, therefore, lose your confidence, which hath a great reward. For patience is necessary for you; that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise. For yet a little and a very little while, and he that is to come, will come, and will not delay. But my just man liveth by faith; but if he withdraw himself, he shall not please my soul.—*Heb.* x. 32–38.

THUS far the words of St. Paul in his Letter to the Hebrews converted to Christ.

This Letter was certainly written from Italy,

as is clear from the next verse to the last, but whether from Rome or from some other place in Italy is not known; it is, however, likely from various hints that it was written outside Rome, as it is also very likely that it was written a few years before the fall of Jerusalem, which took place about the sixty-fourth year of our era, and three years before the Apostle sealed his faith and his mission with his blood.

This Letter is so different from the others of St. Paul that it is commonly believed to have been written, not by him, but by some one else, possibly by Luke or Clement, but more probably by his disciple Apollo. The substance and the argument were furnished by St. Paul, and hence the Letter is really his; but the development, the form, the swing, and the style are all those of the Apostle's disciple, whoever he may have been.

The subject of this Letter, a most important one at that time, when the quarrel between the Christians who had been Hebrews and the Christians who had been Pagans was at its height, turns entirely upon the Mosaic Law; and the scope of the Letter is to show that the Mosaic Law was to cease and to give place to the Law promulgated by Christ.

To get a right idea of the passage we are to explain we should keep in mind the teaching of the Apostle in the verses that precede it.

He says that, the holy sacrifices of the Old Law being abolished, there is now but one sacrifice, that of Jesus Christ; that with Him, our Pontiff, we should confidently draw near to God; that we should be steadfast in our hope; that we should not neglect the assemblies if we would not incur the wrath of God; that if one, who violated the Law of Moses, was mercilessly punished, how much more will he deserve punishment in time to come who treads under foot the Law promulgated by Christ? And here begins the passage we are to comment on, and I ask you to be attentive to what is said.

"Call to mind the former days wherein, being illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions." These words of the Apostle manifestly allude to the fierce trials to which the Christians of Jerusalem were subjected and likely they refer particularly to the persecution described in the Acts of the Apostles,[1] when the Christians were dispersed throughout Judea and Samaria.

I call your attention to the word St. Paul uses in designating those Christians. He calls them *illuminated.* Illuminated and baptized mean the same thing. At that time, as a rule, Baptism was conferred only on adults, and naturally these did not, and could not, receive Baptism until they had been sufficiently in-

[1] viii. 1 *et seq.*

structed. Then Baptism infused into them, together with grace, faith and a knowledge of divine truth. Hence it was quite natural, as the Fathers say, to call Baptism the sacrament of *illumination,* and to call the baptized *illuminated,* since they had received the light of divine truth. "Call to mind, then," St. Paul says, "those days when, having been just born again through Baptism, you were put to the test by being made to endure the most terrible sufferings: *A great fight of afflictions.*" They had scarcely become followers of Christ when they were obliged by the most painful sacrifices to bear witness to their faith in the presence of their enemies; they had scarcely ranged themselves under Christ's banner when they were called upon, like old and tried soldiers, to give battle to ferocious enemies. And St. Paul goes on to tell us what sort of conflict it was that these neophytes in the Faith were compelled to engage in. "Some of you," he says, "in being subjected to insults and sufferings were made a spectacle of, while others shared with you the shameful outrages to which you were forced to submit: *On the one hand indeed, by reproaches and tribulations, you were made a gazing-stock, and on the other became companions of them that were used in such sort.*" The phrase, made a gazing-stock, here used by St. Paul, means to be insulted, reviled, abused, and

mocked in some public place, as in a theater.[1] Some of them were thus publicly outraged and insolently abused, and others, their brothers in faith, suffered together with them on seeing them thus shamefully derided and ill-used: *For you had compassion on them that were in bonds.*

The early Christians of the apostolic age have left us a wonderful example of fraternal charity. While some of them endured persecution and were publicly outraged, all suffered with them. The sorrows of some were the sorrows of all, and, impelled by a spirit of charity, each felt the sufferings of all the others as if they were his own. Is this true, my friends, among us at the present time? Alas, too frequently the misfortune that befalls a brother is regarded as affecting no one but himself, and it may be others rejoice at it. Here, say, is a merchant or a manufacturer who grows suddenly prosperous and wealthy; but just as suddenly fortune changes, some disaster overtakes him and he fails irreparably; whereupon his envious rivals are filled with delight. Here is another who by talent and industry has made himself a name, has risen to a position of honor and to the highest offices; so-called friends, false and malevolent, chafe and rage in secret;

[1] The Greek text has *θεατριζόμενος*, which properly means *to be in a theater—to be made a spectacle in a theater.*

but a day comes when, through the artifices and intrigues of rivals, his power is undermined, he falls from his high position, and his enemies rejoice in his overthrow as if it were a piece of good fortune that had happened to themselves. If those who openly rejoice at the evils that befall others are few, because self-respect forbids them so to rejoice, there are many who are indifferent and who, seeing or hearing of the ill luck of others, shrug their shoulders, shake their heads and go their way. Now, my friends, what is to be inferred from conduct such as this? It implies that our hearts do not warm, or only feebly, with love toward our brothers; if our love for them were living and ardent we should feel the evils that come upon them as if they were our own; we should, as is said here, *have compassion on them;* for compassion means to suffer with those who suffer; it is a characteristic of noble and gentle souls, who are instinctively impelled to go to the aid of those in distress. The charity of the Christians of the first centuries for one another was so great and conspicuous that the Pagans pointed them out, saying: "See those Christians, how they love one another."

The Apostle goes on: *"You had compassion on them that were in bonds and took with joy the being stripped of your goods."* Those Christians received a twofold praise; they suf-

fered with their brethren, who were thrust into prison, and of course they generously provided for their needs; and they not only bore being despoiled of their goods, but they rejoiced in it: *And took with joy the being stripped of your goods.* To bear patiently being unjustly despoiled and robbed is a great virtue, but to rejoice in it is the height of heroism, and of this splendid heroism those first Christians gave an indubitable proof. The Apostle praises all without distinction and hence all, no matter what their condition in life, gave this proof of heroic virtue.

And now let us take a glance at ourselves. It is not a rare thing among us to see men become victims of the rascality of others. How many do we see suffer from deceit, fraud, and intrigues of every kind, and some are even wholly despoiled of their property and reduced to indigence. What do they do, when so dealt with, what do they say? They incessantly cry out in protest, they fill the world with interminable complaints, and leave nothing undone to get back that of which, God permitting, wicked men have robbed them. The conduct of those early Christians and saints, *who took with joy the being stripped of their goods,* is both a great lesson and a great reproof to us.

St. Paul gives the reason why the Christians of Jerusalem, though stripped of everything

belonging to them, still rejoiced, saying: "*Knowing that you have a better and a lasting substance.*" What was this substance? It was the true and abiding wealth of everlasting life which no one could take from them. The goods of earth that men so covet are not only in themselves empty and wholly inadequate to satisfy the cravings of the spirit, but they may be so easily taken from us, and in any event they can not last beyond this present life, which at best is very short. Let us, then, not join in the mad rush after the goods of this world, which, as the Apostle elsewhere says, are only figures and appearances that pass away; which, when destroyed, embitter life, and the possession of which can not last beyond the grave. Being ourselves immortal, let us not tie our hearts to fleeting things, but to those that abide and are eternal.

St. Paul goes on to the practical consequence of all this: "*Do not therefore lose your confidence.*" You have been subjected to a severe trial; you have seen your own property, or that of your brethren in the Faith, pillaged and stolen, and you have felt for them as if you yourselves were the victims; all this has certainly afflicted you and been a great sorrow; still do not allow yourselves to be cast down by fear; do not lose courage; rather, should you be subjected to fresh trials, gather fresh

strength to go fearlessly forward; be brave; renew and redouble your confidence, *which hath a great reward.* The soldier who fights valiantly to the very end carries off the victory, not he who, after fighting for a time, loses heart, throws away his arms, and flies like a craven.

Never give up the fight; let the thought of eternal salvation be your stay and support. Why does the farmer plough the soil and endure heat and cold? Why does the merchant leave his home, go aboard a steamship, cross the ocean and traverse foreign lands? Why does the scientist turn over the pages of dusty volumes and peer into the microscope, studying those imperceptible living creatures that career about in a drop of water as if it were a lake? They labor and travel and study with the prospect of gaining a reward, of having a plentiful harvest, of the profit they look forward to, of the glory that will accrue to them. Take from man the hope of a recompense and he will fold his arms and refuse to labor; set before him a great and a sure recompense and he will never grow tired, he will redouble his labors. If an earthly reward, trifling in itself and of short duration, makes the lazy toilsome and energetic, and the timid brave, what will the certainty of a reward that is boundless and eternal not effect? Be up, then, and doing. Courage;

for only such may look forward to a great recompense: *Which hath a great reward.*

St. Paul in the text insists on such courage as begets constancy and patience: *For patience or constancy is necessary for you.* This virtue is necessary for us all, day in and day out; it ought to be our daily bread. How could men get on on this earth without patience? It is necessary for the sick man who lies on a bed of pain, for the healthy who toil in field or shop, for the obedient man that he may obey, for the ruler that he may rule, for the poor that they may bear up under their privations, for the rich in the midst of their annoyances and anxieties. This is the virtue that forms heroes, creates saints and martyrs, and hence St. Jerome likens it to a martyrdom. And in fact what is the life of man here below under his weight of suffering but a continuous martyrdom?[1] The Pagans themselves praised this virtue, saying that it mitigates evils, is the mother of peace and the necessary companion of life; and one of their poets wisely adds that patience makes less unendurable the pains we can not escape.[2]

[1] "Non solum effusio sanguinis in confessione reputatur, sed devotae quoque mentis servitus immaculata, quotidianum martyrium est." (Epitaph. Paulae.)

"Patientia est martyrium in cogitatione." (S. Greg. M. Homil. xxxv, in Evang.)

[2] "Patientia laevius fit quidquid tollerari nequit." (Horat.)

Tertullian tells what sort of patience we should have to make head against the tempests of this life. In his work entitled *Patience* he writes thus: "The countenance of the patient man is tranquil and placid; his forehead serene, never contracted with anger or gloom; his eyebrows smooth, betokening good humor; his eyes modestly cast down, yet not sad; his lips wear a smile and are decorously silent. Your patience irritates the wicked. If I continue patient I shall not feel pain, and if I am not conscious of pain I shall not desire to be revenged."[1] This is Christian patience that makes us dear to God and man.

"That doing the will of God you may receive the promise." We do the will of God by keeping His law, bearing up cheerfully under the afflictions He sends or permits to come upon us, and the reward of all this is the gaining of the blessings promised in the life to come. As you will observe in almost every verse the Apostle reminds us of the object of our hope, namely, everlasting life, for which we all yearn. And nothing else would be able to sustain us in the midst of the many trials through which we

1 "Vultus illi tranquillus et placidus, frons pura, nulla moeroris aut irae rugositate contracta; remissa aeque in laetum modum supercilia, oculis humilitate, non infelicitate dejectis: os taciturnitatis honore signatum. . . . Fatigetur improbitas patientia tua: quod si patientiae incubabo, non dolebo; quod si non dolebo, ulcisci non desiderabo."

have to pass. This is the one cry of faith and hope, which alone can fill us with the courage necessary to bear away the victory, the cry which should ever resound in our ears: "Heaven! Heaven!"

And since things near at hand are most powerful to stir our souls and keep alive our hope, St. Paul adds: *"Yet a little and a very little while, and He, that is to come, will come, and will not delay."* These words are a quotation from the prophet Habacuc,[1] who was comforting the people of Israel, groaning for years under the captivity of Babylon and waiting for the liberation, so often promised by God by the mouth of the prophets. Habacuc was assuring Israel in God's name that the hour of their liberation was at hand, that he would come, who was to come, namely, Cyrus, and that he would not delay; that he would break the Babylonish yoke and would send the people back to their country and firesides. St. Paul, making the words of the prophet his own, applies them in another and a higher sense, saying: "Courage, my children, bear patiently being despoiled of your temporal goods and being persecuted for your faith; persevere, for in a little while He will come, who is to come; He, your true Liberator, Jesus Christ, will come, of whom Cyrus was but a faint figure."

[1] ii. 3–4.

To which coming of Christ does the Apostle here refer? To the first, that is the particular judgment at the hour of death, or to the second, the confirmation of the first, at the end of time? Both the first and the last may be understood, and it may be better to take these words as referring to both together, since, though far distant from each other, they are inseparable. No matter how far death may be away, it is ever near and at the threshold of each of us, and hence St. Paul was right in saying: *Yet a little while, a very little while, and He, that is to come, will come.* And since the second coming is in fact only a solemn manifestation of the first, the latter may in a sense be said to be one with the former.

And in the meantime until He comes, who is to come, what should the Christian do? St. Paul answers, again quoting the words of the same prophet: "*My just man,*" he says, "*shall live by faith.*" If these words are taken in the sense in which they were used by Habacuc, they mean: "My beloved people, ye who have so long yearned and wept in the land of the stranger by the banks of the Euphrates, remain steadfast and continue to hope; yet a little while and your liberator will come; the divine promise made by the mouth of Jeremias and Ezechiel will not fail; ye shall soon see the hills of Jerusalem; in the meantime be comforted, let hope

be your food and drink: *The just man lives by faith.*" If we take them in the sense intended by St. Paul, who in quoting them makes them his own, they mean: "O ye faithful followers of Jesus Christ, ye who suffer and groan in this land of exile, ye whom the enemies of Jesus Christ and yours oppress, despoil, and tyrannize over, do not lose heart; in a little while, in a very little while He, your Liberator, will come, He, Jesus Christ the Supreme Judge of the living and the dead, and He will give to each according to his works; He will free you from this cruel servitude and conduct you to heaven, your true country. In the meanwhile remain steadfast and live by faith: *The just man lives by faith.*" We say that man lives by breathing and taking nourishment and that throughout his whole life he waxes strong by food and air, so also does man live by faith and hope, since his whole mind and heart are centered on the things he believes in and hopes some day to possess. Note what sort of a life is that of the true Christian; he is visited by afflictions, sometimes of the soul, sometimes of the body; he suffers more or less continuously, for his entire life is nothing but a series of sorrows, softened at rare intervals by a few pleasures. Enlightened by faith and borne up by hope, the daughter of faith, he lifts his eyes on high, fixes them on God; by faith he comes to

know God and the joys promised by Him to those who serve Him; these he contemplates, loves, desires, and he knows that, when the present life comes to an end, he will possess them and be happy. Naturally, his mind and heart live where he sees perfect happiness in store for him; his body is here and on earth, but he lives in heaven, in God, in whom all his thoughts and yearnings center; he lives by faith; he looks forward, that is, to the fulfilling of the divine promises. A familiar similitude will make this truth plain to you. Say a man takes shipping and launches out upon the deep; his one thought is to reach the port towards which his vessel is heading. The heavens may be overcast, the winds blow furiously, the waves rise in anger and lash the sides of the vessel, threatening to swallow it in the abyss of waters, and all the while this passenger thinks only of reaching the port; he yearns for nothing else, he fancies that he sees it, that he is approaching it, that he can discern his friends who are come to welcome him; and he already almost tastes the joy of having escaped the fury of the waves and of treading on land. Is it not true that the poor voyager throughout the whole time of the passage across the ocean yearns and longs for the port of destination and that he lives in the hope of some day, be it near or distant, arriving there? Whatever he says or

does has some relation to his destination; it is the one thought that is ever before him; it masters him, it wholly engrosses him, he lives in it and for it. My friends, we have been launched out upon the sea of life by the hand of God; He instructs and guides us; let us, then, sail away toward the port of heaven. The more the winds rise in anger, the more furious are the waves of the deep, the greater the terror of pirates who infest the seas, the more living, the more ardent will be our desire to drop anchor in port, the asylum of peace and safety.

In the midst of the trials and vicissitudes of the present life the wisest thing to do, in fact the only remedy for them, is what St. Paul suggests, namely, to live by faith: *The just man lives by faith.*[1]

[1] It may seem that I should write a Homily on the Gospel of this Mass. This Gospel is taken from the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, and, as any one can see, is from verse three to verse thirteen identical with that of St. Luke, already explained in Homily XIV, and hence I omit it.

HOMILY XVI

Mass of a Confessor-Bishop

Statuit ei Dominus, etc.

Behold a high-priest who in his days pleased God, and was found righteous, and in the day of wrath was made a reconciliation. There was not found the like of him, who kept the law of the Most High. Therefore by an oath the Lord made him increase among His people. The Lord made him a blessing unto all nations, and confirmed His covenant upon his head. He acknowledged him in His blessings and He preserved for him His mercy; and he found favor in the eyes of the Lord. He glorified him in the sight of kings and He gave him a crown of glory. He made an everlasting covenant with him, and gave him the great priesthood, and made him blessed in glory to execute the priesthood, and to have praise in His name, and to offer Him a worthy incense for an odor of sweetness.—*Eccles.* xliv. 17 *passim;* xlv. 3 *passim.*

Such is the Lesson just read in the Mass of this day. Before beginning the explanation it may be well to make some remarks which will certainly be found useful and possibly necessary.

First of all I wish to tell you that these sentences are found in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, not following one another consecutively, but scattered here and there in two chapters, and slightly modified. They refer to various personages of the Old Testament, some to one and some to another. The Church has brought them together and woven them into one single narrative with a view of bringing out the excellence of the sacerdotal office and dignity of the Old Law, which was a figure of the excellence and dignity of the priesthood of the New.

Next, this is the first time I have had occasion to explain this passage of the inspired Book of Ecclesiasticus. This Book was also called the Book of Wisdom of Sirach, a personage of the Old Testament; and it was subsequently called *Ecclesiasticus,* from the fact that it was frequently read in the Church. It was not written by Solomon, as some have erroneously held; it was written some centuries after his time, most likely shortly before the Machabees, during the domination of the Greeks, when the persecutions against the Hebrews began. We do not know the author of

this Book, nor is this at all important; it is enough for us to know that it is divinely inspired, no matter who may have been the writer.

The Book treats entirely of moral subjects and is full of the most beautiful sentiments, which is likely one of the reasons why it was so generally read in the Church.

In these two chapters the inspired writer celebrates the praises of the greatest among the patriarchs, and the Church ascribes and applies the expressions he uses to the holy bishop or pontiff, whom we commemorate to-day.

And now let us set to work to explain the text.

"*Behold the high priest who in his days pleased God.*" The words: "*Behold the high priest who in his days,*" are not found in the Sacred Text; they are inserted by the Church, which thus bids us call to mind, and as it were sets before our eyes, the majestic figure of the holy bishop whom we honor to-day. The Church seems to say to her children: "Behold the high priest whose deeds we commemorate; behold him as he advances clad in his splendid vestments: *Behold the high priest;* contemplate him, bow down before him."

"During the days of his mortal life *he pleased God.*" Who is this who pleased God, of whom the sacred writer is speaking? You could scarcely guess; it is *Enoch,* of whom

Scripture says that *he walketh with God,* that is, he pleased God, because he faithfully observed His law and lived a holy life in the midst of the frightful corruption that swept over the earth and provoked the terrible vengeance of the deluge. A faithful and obedient servant is pleasing to his master; a docile, respectful, and loving son is pleasing to his father; so also was Enoch pleasing to God, because he lived the life of a faithful servant, of an obedient son, and therefore was *he translated into paradise.* God took him up from the midst of that depraved generation, he exempted him from death, and at the end of time he will reappear with Elias to prepare the peoples for the second coming of Christ and to contend against Antichrist, the man of sin, in the supreme struggle.

The text goes on: "*And he was found just.*" It may be thought that the text still speaks of *Enoch,* whereas it is speaking of another patriarch, namely of Noah, the tenth Patriarch from Adam, as Enoch was the seventh. It is said of him that he was found *just,* a frequent Biblical phrase that implies the assemblage of all virtues and the fulfilling of all one's duties, and is synonymous with the word *saint.* And in truth who is a *just* man in the strict sense of the word? He who gives to every one his due, commencing with God and coming on down to

himself and to the men in the midst of whom he lives; now to give to all and to every one, to give always and completely, what is due to each severally, means to be supremely virtuous and truly saintly, and such Noah was found to be. By whom? Not by men, who may easily mistake and who see only what appears, but by God, who does not mistake and who searches hearts.

He was found just in the midst of men given over to every vice; and this makes his virtue all the more admirable, since he kept himself clean in the midst of so much uncleanness, thus proving again that any one who really wishes to tread the path of virtue, even in the midst of the greatest perils, can do so with the aid of God, which is never wanting. How can we do other than admire the Patriarch, who not only refused to be hurried along by the torrent of corruption that then covered the earth, and remained faithful to God, but for a long six hundred years never ceased to raise his voice in defence of the truth, then contemned and trodden under foot, all the while calling upon men to do penance and menacing them with the divine judgment to come?

"*And in the time of wrath he was made a reconciliation.*" The time in which Noah lived was certainly a time of the wrath of God, when He was forced to cry out in sorrow: "*It re-*

penteth Me that I have made man." Corruption must have reached its extremest limit, both in intensity and in extension, when it called forth from God those memorable words, and when He could find no other remedy for it except to exterminate the human race, and to make it anew, preserving Noah alone, as if a second Adam, and his family. In the midst of the terrible lightnings of God's anger and the universal flood that swallowed up the entire human race, Noah appeared as the instrument of reconciliation. He, and he alone, placated the wrath of God and in him was preserved the human race upon the earth; going forth from the ark he offered an acceptable sacrifice to God and obtained a promise that mankind would never again be destroyed by flood. Rightly, then, is Noah the instrument of reconciliation, as is also the priest, and still more the high-priest, among Christian peoples. What else does he do by his prayers, by the graces, of which he is the dispenser, by keeping in memory the divine judgments, by calling sinners to repentance, and by all the acts of his sacred ministry, except to exercise this office of reconciliation in the midst of men? How many souls does he rescue from the wrath of God and, gathering them into the ark of the Church, lead them on to salvation!

Let us go on to the next clause: "*There was*

not found the like to him." He, who has no other like to him in the eyes of God, is neither Enoch nor Noah, but Abraham, as the text specifically says: *Abraham the great father of a multitude of nations.* In all the patriarchal and Mosaic economy the figure of Abraham looms up large above all others; called by God in an extraordinary manner, he goes on a pilgrimage from Chaldea into the land of Canaan; he is honored by a visit of angels; he is a prophet; he is the father of the chosen people, Israel, and of the Son of God according to the flesh; he is the father of the Idumeans. His name has continued glorious, not only among Hebrews and Christians, but also among all Mussulmans, who regard him as their father.

Abraham kept the law of the Most High. He kept, that is, he observed the law of God, which was not yet written on tablets, but engraven on the heart of man, the first and fundamental law of nature, which came from God with nature itself, and upon which every other law is based. He observed that law which God miraculously made resound in his ears and in his heart, when He commanded him to quit the land of his birth, when He promised him a son and directed him to offer this same son to Him in sacrifice, thus extinguishing in him all his hopes. What faith! What heroic obedience to the will of God was that of this

man, who is justly called *the father of faith.* Let us strive to imitate him, always bearing in mind that all virtue and all sanctity consist in obedience to every detail of God's law.

Therefore by an oath God made him increase in his people. When Abraham had proved his faith and obedience by showing his readiness to immolate his beloved and only son Isaac, God as a reward promised him that an immense posterity would be given him, and, what was incomparably more, that in him all nations would be blessed, because from his seed should one day come the Saviour of the world, and these splendid promises God confirmed by an oath.

Every one can easily see how these words fit admirably the priest and bishop to whom they are applied. Jesus Christ by the rite of ordination associates the bishop with Himself; He raises him to the supreme height of the priesthood; He stamps upon his forehead an ineffaceable character; He extends to him that eternal oath, taken by the Father: *The Lord hath sworn: Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech;* He makes his blessed hands prolific, so that of him are begotten, as spiritual children, bishops and priests, and of them again other spiritual children, the simple faithful. Who can number the spiritual children of a bishop! Of him

may be said, as of Abraham: "In thee shall all nations be blessed," or as the Lesson of to-day says: *"The Lord made him increase in his people,"* that is, He has multiplied his spiritual children.

"The Lord gave him the blessing of all nations and confirmed His covenant upon his head." The same praise given to Abraham, and repeated in the case of Isaac, is made applicable to a confessor and bishop. The covenant referred to, which God made with Abraham, is ever the divine promise, confirmed by an oath, the sensible token of which was circumcision; the divine promise, that passed from Abraham to Isaac, and was by Isaac again confirmed, not upon Esau, but upon Jacob, as is stated in Ecclesiasticus.

"God acknowledged him in His blessings and He preserved for him His mercy, and he found favor in the eyes of the Lord." In Holy Writ, and so also in common usage, the word *to acknowledge* often means *to wish well to, to love,* and hence it is said that God *acknowledges* those who are His, and does not acknowledge those who are not His; and we also say that a father acknowledges a son, and a servant his master, meaning a loving acknowledgment. And this is the meaning of the word in the phrase: *"God acknowledged him in His blessings,"* which is equivalent to saying: "He

heaped favors, temporal and spiritual, upon him; He preserved him from his enemies; He multiplied his riches; He confirmed to him the promises made to Abraham and Isaac; and He showed him the greatness of his beloved son Joseph."

"*He preserved for him His mercy,*" by perpetuating holy men in his offspring; and "he," that is Jacob, "*found favor in the eyes of the Lord,*" a phrase that is frequently used in Holy Writ, and signifies the favor of God. The angel said to the virgin Mary: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace or favor with God," words which may be thus rendered: "Fear not, Mary, for thou art dear to God; He loves thee, and He looks upon thee with pleasure."

"*God gave him a crown of glory.*" These words as they stand are not found in the Sacred Text, but their equivalent is there, and this is the same to us. Having spoken words in praise of Enoch and Noah, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the inspired author goes on to speak the praises of Moses and Aaron, and scarcely has he pronounced the name of Aaron, when he begins to describe the richness and splendor of his sacerdotal vestments and to recall the crown of gold he wore upon his head, on which was written the legend: "*Holy to*

the Lord." [1] The Church, abridging the words of Ecclesiasticus, ascribes to the Christian bishop the most splendid ornament of the Hebrew Pontiff, and thus expresses herself: *He gave him a crown of glory,* the symbol of his holiness and power, before whom all the people bowed in veneration, as before the representative of God.

"God made an everlasting covenant with him," that is, with Aaron. The priesthood of Aaron is said to be everlasting not in itself, but solely in its relation to the priesthood of Christ, which alone is everlasting; for it is clear that the Mosaic priesthood was transient and had to give place to that of Christ.

"And made him blessed in glory to execute the priesthood, and to have praise in His name, and to offer Him a worthy incense for an odor of sweetness." All these expressions are found in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, but not in the order in which they are read in the Missal; they are scattered here and there in as many verses and are here brought together in consecutive order. The Mosaic priesthood

[1] The crown of gold that bound the forehead of the Hebrew high-priest was formed of a semi-circular band of gold reaching to the ears, where it was fastened with ribbons; on his head rose a miter surrounded by a triple crown of gold. On the golden band that gleamed on his forehead were engraven the words: *Sanctitas Domino,* or as it is written in Ecclesiasticus: *Expressa signo sanctitatis.*

in its supreme head was undoubtedly encompassed with high and almost divine honors and its power was great; the same must be said of the Christian priesthood, which in its plenitude of order resides in the bishop. In the passage quoted some of the principal offices of the Jewish priesthood are touched upon, and do not differ from the principal offices of the Christian priesthood, which are prayer and sacrifices: *To have or to sing praise in His name and to offer Him a worthy incense for an odor of sweetness.*[1] The priest must pray for himself and for the people; he may be called a man of prayer, as the temple, his abiding place, is called *The House of prayer.* Prayer, in the language of Scripture, is the sacrifice of praise: *Hostiam laudis,* and is by excellence the office of the priest.

The second office of the priest in the Old Law, higher and more excellent than the first, was sacrifice, strictly so called. He burned incense before God; he immolated the victims on the altar according to the rite prescribed in the Law, and he sprinkled the people with their blood. It is also the office of the priest of the New Law to offer the sacrifice, foreshadowed by those of the Mosaic Law, the one holy Victim,

[1] *For an odor of sweetness* is a pure Hebraism and means *most sweet.*

Jesus Christ, the Son of God and of Mary. It may be said that in this act of sacrifice, the center and culminating point of religion, are summed up and concentrated the entire dignity and greatness of the priesthood.

My friends, I would not have you lose sight of a most important truth; namely, the priesthood, as St. Paul says, is for the benefit of the people: *Ordained for men;* for them the priest must pray and offer sacrifice, he must reconcile them with God and call down upon them the choicest blessings. But are the people to stand by indifferent, being simply spectators? By no means; they must unite their voices with that of the priest in praising, blessing, thanking, and glorifying God; they must be united mind and heart with the priest, who immolates the divine Victim, and offer to God, as Scripture says, a spiritual sacrifice, that is, they must offer their mind in faith, and their heart in love, and their whole being as a holocaust and for an odor of sweetness.

Before bringing this commentary and homily to a close it will be useful to sum up in a few words the principal points of it, in which the height and holiness of the supreme grade of the Christian priesthood are reflected, as in a mirror. The Church, following the inspired Book of Ecclesiasticus, calls to mind the

Patriarchs *Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac,* and *Jacob;* she next speaks of Moses and Aaron, the great Hebrew high-priest; she points out to us how in their virtues and offices are foreshadowed the virtues, and symbolized the offices of the holy bishop whom she wishes to honor. This bishop and saint found favor with God, as did Enoch; like Noah he was righteous, and like Noah he was an instrument of reconciliation and a second father of those who through him were saved; like Abraham he was great and glorious in his people, by his preaching, announcing the word of God, and by his authority, having His law observed; like Abraham, he saw grow up about him a numerous people who called him father; like Isaac he received the divine promises; and, like Jacob, he drew down upon himself heavenly blessings; like Moses he found favor in the eyes of the Lord, received the law and promulgated it to the people; and, finally, like Aaron he received a crown of glory upon his head, the symbol of his divine power, and was clothed with the exalted office of praying and praising God, and of offering to Him a sacrifice worthy of Him.

Let us to-day as the children of Israel did of old in the presence of Aaron, bow our heads and bend our knees to the holy bishop, in whom dwelt the fulness of the priesthood of Christ,

and whose deeds the Church to-day joyfully commemorates; he was greater than the patriarchs and greater than Aaron, for Christ Himself lived in him and wrought through him.

HOMILY XVII

Mass of a Confessor-Bishop

A MAN going into a far country, called his servants, and delivered to them his goods; and to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to every one according to his proper ability; and immediately he took his journey. And he that had received the five talents went his way and traded with the same, and gained other five. And in like manner he that had received the two gained other two. But he that had received the one, going his way digged into the earth, and hid his lord's money. But after a long time the lord of those servants came, and reckoned with them. And he that had received the five talents coming, brought other five talents, saying: Lord, thou didst deliver to me five talents, behold I have gained other five over and above. His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the two talents came and

said: Lord, thou deliveredst two talents to me: behold I have gained other two. His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant: because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord.—*Matt.* xxv. 14–23.

THERE is no Christian who is not familiar with the parable, or who has not, without being taught it, at least a confused knowledge of the lesson it is meant to convey, a lesson not only applicable to all, but weighty and practical. St. Luke [1] records a parable so like this that it may be reasonably assumed that the two are one and the same. The parable may have been spoken a second time by Christ with some variations; but it is more likely that these variations are due, not to the fact that Christ narrated it twice, but to the difference in the character and scope of the two evangelists.[2]

St. Matthew gives the parable as if spoken by Christ during the last week of His life;

[1] xix. 11 *et seq.*

[2] St. Matthew wrote his Gospel expressly for the Hebrews, who had been converted to Christ, and hence he wrote it in Hebrew. He adheres in every particular to Hebrew usage, and here speaks of *talents*, a denomination used by the Hebrews in speaking of money. St. Luke, on the contrary, wrote his Gospel expressly for the Gentiles converted to Christ, and wrote it in Greek. He adheres to the usage of the Greeks and Romans in speaking of moneys, measures, weights, etc. Hence he does not use the word *talent*, but *mine*, a Greek term.

and it may be taken for granted that it was narrated in the home of Lazarus and of Mary and Martha on the Wednesday preceding the Last Supper, both to them and to others who had come to listen to Our Lord.

The scope of this familiar and beautiful parable is to inculcate the necessity of being industrious and of making a proper use of all the gifts God gives us during the course of our lives, for when the end comes we shall be called upon to give a most strict reckoning. There is no living human being who may not and ought not apply the parable to himself, and, this being true, you have a very special reason for being attentive.

"*A man going into a far country called his servants and delivered to them his goods.*" Who is this wealthy man who is about to set out to go into a far country? There can be no doubt that he is God, or if we wish to take these words "going into a far country" literally, he is Jesus Christ, who a little later on visibly left the world. Who are the servants to whom he delivers his goods? Undoubtedly all who believe in Him; and I am of the opinion that by these three men are meant, not only all believers, but all men, since all men are and ought to be His servants, for there is not a single one who has not received his proper share of goods. And what are these goods that the

Master entrusts to His servants? The Gospel calls them *His goods,* and by this ample phrase He includes all, and excludes none, and there is, therefore, no reason to exclude a single one, no matter to which order it belongs, the *natural* or the *supernatural.*

To these two orders all the goods, of which God is so lavish to man, may be reduced. The *natural* goods are our personal being and all the means given us to preserve, develop, and perfect it. A rapid review of these goods will reveal to us both how great God is and how strictly we are bound to Him by the ties of gratitude.

We exist; we have a soul; this is a most simple and spiritual substance; it is wholly in every part of the body; it is the same whether we are seven, fifteen, thirty, fifty, or eighty years of age. By its power of thought it ranges freely where it will; it explores all the fields of science, it distinguishes the true from the false, good from evil; by the will it is master of its acts and can resolve to do as it likes; by the memory it calls up the past and makes it present; by the imagination it forms to itself images of all things. These five, intelligence, will, liberty, memory, and imagination are splendid endowments that belong to this *I,* which is myself, each of which, if duly considered, is a marvel.

Then, this soul has a body in which it lives and to which it gives life, in which it feels and works, through which it keeps up continual relations with the outer world and the outer world with it. It sees with the eyes and hears with the ears; by the sense of smell and taste it distinguishes fragrances and savors, and by the sense of touch it ascertains the presence of bodies and their qualities. How great and numerous are the goods received from God, the Creator! Nor is this all: think of the air we breathe and without which we should die; of the light that rejoices the eye, that reveals all things to us, that warms the earth and makes it prolific; and of water, not less necessary than air or light; think of the sea and the mountains, of the animals, herbage and plants, all of which, each in its own way, contribute to sustain life, to satisfy our needs, and give us pleasure. I say nothing of countless other natural goods; for everything we are, or have, or can have, whether of body or soul, is all, all, the gift of God, because we have nothing of our own, and if we have acquired somewhat by our powers, even this is the gift of God, since from Him we have received the powers by which we acquired it.

If from the *natural* order we pass to the *supernatural,* what a mass of goods we have received and are momentarily receiving.

First of all, there is the precious gift of faith received in Baptism; Christian education received at home, the word of God received in Church; so much good reading, so many examples of virtue, so many encouragements to do good, so many warnings against evil, so many inspirations, so many sins pardoned, so many graces through the sacraments, the Church herself in whose bosom we live, Jesus Christ who abides in the midst of us and offers Himself a victim for our sins, in a word, all the benefits of redemption, known to God alone. Gather up and heap together all these goods of the *natural* order and of the *supernatural;* reflect that we know only a part, and that the smallest part, of them; that we can not, except very imperfectly, appreciate their worth; that the duration of these goods is prolonged, and for the most part, at least as far as God is concerned, interminable; and then say if God has not been lavish and magnificent toward us, if it is not true that He has delivered to us all *His goods* with measureless generosity, irrespective of time or person, or of merits, which we had not and could not have had? What has been and is our gratitude? I leave the reply to your conscience.

Let us proceed with the parable. Jesus says: "*To one* (of the servants) *he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one.*" It

is hardly necessary to say that the talent spoken of here represents the number and measure of the goods delivered by God to the servants, and as the number of talents distributed is different, so also is the quantity of goods given to men. The Gospel speaks only of three servants, but these three represent the whole human race; and note that no servant is said to have received nothing, for, as I have said, all men receive more or less of God's goods. The talent, which was calculated by weight, and not by count, if it was of gold, was worth 130,000 of our lire,[1] if of silver, about 60,000. Having specified the number of talents distributed to each, Our Lord, as if to justify this action, adds these words: *"To every one according to his proper ability,"* words which must be understood according to Catholic teaching, if we would not fall into grave error; and hence I beg you to attend closely to what I am about to say.

Let me ask: Can any man, or even an angel, by his merits deserve to be called into being by God, or to receive this or that grade of intellect, will, or memory? Assuredly not, neither man nor angel, before being created, has anything, or is anything, and in consequence neither can think of anything, or will anything, or do anything, and hence neither can

[1] A lira is equivalent to about 19 cents of our money.—Tr.

merit anything. This is a truth mathematically evident. Hence neither man nor angel could have merited to be created by God, nor could either have merited that God should have given him these or those endowments of mind, or these or those qualities of body, or at this or that time. These goods, then, be they what they may, are not due to us, because we have no merit, and they are, therefore, wholly gratuitous, and hence we should recognize that they come absolutely from the bounty of the Creator. Therefore the words of Christ: *"He gave to every one according to his ability,"* can not refer to these goods.

Both men and angels by making a good use of existence, intellect, and will and of the other powers received can do good works, and thus merit other goods both here on earth and for the life to come; and these latter goods will correspond to the works accomplished. This is the sense in which the words of Christ: *"He gave to every one according to his proper ability,"* should be understood.

But God, over and above the natural goods which He has bountifully bestowed on man, may give him other goods wholly superior to nature, such as faith, revelation, and interior and exterior graces, all of which make him a son of God by adoption and render him capable of one day seeing God in His essence and of

being happy with God's own happiness, which is the uttermost term of the whole supernatural order. Can either man or angel by his works and *natural* powers merit these *supernatural* goods? In other words: Is God obliged to give of these *supernatural* goods in the measure of one's *natural* goods and according to each one's proper ability? It is an article of faith that *natural* and *supernatural* goods are incommensurable, that there is no proportion between them, and hence neither man nor angel can merit the latter, and neither is God obliged to give the latter in the measure of the former and according to the ability of each. As man could not merit to be created, so, now that he is created, he can not merit supernatural goods, just as a pear tree can not bring forth grapes, nor iron be converted into gold, nor water produce diamonds. But having received supernatural goods solely from the bounty of God, we can by making a right use of them acquire the right to other supernatural goods, because there is a proportion between the two.

Can God give His *supernatural* goods according to the measure of the *natural* goods, so that he, who possesses the latter more abundantly, will receive more abundantly of the former; thus, for instance should an angel, because he is of a higher nature, possess more of them than does man? God is not obliged to distribute His

gifts of grace according to the gifts of nature, but He may do so and it is fitting that He should, and hence as a rule we see that when the gifts of nature are greater, so also are the gifts of grace. The words then: *"He gave to every one according to his proper ability,"* should be understood to mean this: "He gave the talents, or His supernatural gifts, according as each one was by nature capable of receiving them, because it so pleased Him, not because man had any right to them, or because He was obliged to give them." [1]

But some one will say: Why not give the goods of nature and grace to all in equal measure? This equality would remove all envy, would show that God is equally the Father of all, would take away any pretext for complaint, and would make more conspicuous the industry of some and the indolence and sloth of others.

God is the absolute Master of His goods, and may be more lavish of them to some than to others; of this no one has any right to complain, and all should thank Him in the measure

[1] Some writers have seen fit to put another interpretation upon these words; they say that the condition: *To every one according to his ability*, was introduced into the parable, because it is an ordinary and reasonable condition, and preserves a certain verisimilitude, but not because it was exactly in keeping with the truth set forth in the parable. This is also a good interpretation.

of the goods received. Should God give of His goods to all in equal measure there would be some inconveniences. First of all, men and angels might be led to believe that God dealt with them all equally because He was obliged to do so and because gifts were due to them and not gratuitous; a diversity in the distribution of gifts proves that He has the absolute ownership of them and that they are wholly gratuitous. Again, inequality of gifts creates variety and produces harmony. What would become of the human race if all men were equal in stature and strength, in intellect and aptitude, in physiognomy and natural tendencies? How monotonous and how tiresome! It would be like ever hearing the same sound in music and the same voice in singing. Variety of gifts gives us that wonderful harmony we perceive in the natural order and in the supernatural. Nay more: this inequality of gifts begets humility, modesty, and charity, and binds men together, since he who has more, seeing him who has less, ought to appreciate the munificence of the giver and to feel himself moved to generosity toward him who is in want, and the latter in turn ought to feel grateful to his benefactor and to God, from whom come all good gifts. It was, therefore, a wise provision of the infinite goodness of God to make an unequal dis-

tribution of gifts, and we should be ever deeply grateful to Him for having done so.

And now let us go on with the parable and see what use the three servants made of the capital received.

"He that had received five talents went his way and traded with the same and gained other five. And in like manner he that had received the two gained other two." Each of these two servants doubled his capital, and if the sum received by each was unequal, so were the labor and industry of each.

"But he, that had received the one, going his way digged into the earth and hid his lord's money." Of the three, he who had received least, was the most indolent; he hid the money, that is, he did not make the gifts received productive. And why so? Was it because the gifts received by him were trifling as compared with those of the other two? But the gain ought to be in proportion to the gifts, and hence as regards the amount of the gain there could be no difference, since he who received more should pay back more, and he who received less should pay back less. The difference necessarily consists in the greater or less thrift and industry of those who received the gifts, or in the good or bad will of each. I think the purpose of the evangelist is to emphasize the lack of good will in him who re-

ceived less than the others, and to give us to understand that he who receives less is very frequently more indolent than others, and that if the judge is severe with him, he will be much more severe with him who has received much, according to the rule laid down by Christ: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much will be required, and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more."

Having set forth the use that each of the three servants made of the talents committed to them, the parable goes on to draw the practical conclusion and to state the recompense that each received: *"After a long time the lord of those servants came and reckoned with them."* Of course every one understands that the time that elapsed between the giving of the talents and the calling of the servants for a reckoning signifies the span of each man's life, during which alone he may trade, or make the gifts he has received productive; and every one also understands that this call to render an account, sent out by the lord, who comes from the far country into which he had gone, signifies the end of life, or the judgment, which each one will have to undergo as soon as he dies.

The parable goes on in a vivid and dramatic way to say: *"He that had received the five*

talents coming, brought other five talents, saying: Lord thou didst deliver to me five talents, behold I have gained other five over and above.'' Assuredly this good servant in presenting to the lord a gain equal to the amount of the capital received rejoiced in his heart because he was conscious of having done his duty, and because he felt sure that his conduct would be praised and that he would receive an adequate reward.

My friends, there will come a day for each of us, the last of our lives, when we shall be obliged to give back to the divine Master the capital received, and with it the earnings gained by our industry and thrift; bear well in mind that none of us can possibly escape this call and reckoning. The capital received is the gift of God and in itself is indestructible; existence is indestructible, and so also is the soul with its powers; grace, which is our second capital, incomparably more precious than the first, is also indestructible, but this we can lose. Now it will not be enough to give back the capital; the earnings, which ought to be in proportion to the capital, must also be restored. If you, my friends, loan a sum of money for a year, will you be satisfied to have only the sum itself restored to you? No, over and above this sum you will demand, and justly, the interest. If you let a field to a tenant, will

you be content at the end of a year to get back only the field? No; over and above the field you will require part of its product, or the interest on the money value according to agreement. So, also, will God do the same at the end of our lives; He will require us to restore the capital, that is, the gifts of nature and grace; but over and above these He will require the fruit of our co-operation, the earnings made, in other words, our works, and these must be in the measure of the gifts received. And remember, an account will be demanded of every least gift, both of nature and of grace, and we must also restore the gain, for nothing can escape the eye of God. We shall be called upon to give an account of the use made of our reason, will, and memory, of our eyes and ears and tongue, of our body and our wealth, of the sacraments received, of the word of God listened to, of the inspirations granted us, of everything that the merciful God has kindly given us from the first instant of our lives to the moment of death, and all this we shall see set down in the book from which nothing can be erased. Shall we be able to say to the great Lord, as the servant in the Gospel said: "Thou didst give me five talents, here are other five; Thou didst give me two talents, here are other two"? If so, we shall be happy. But if this very day, at this very instant, we were

called upon to give an account, what would we do? What would become of us? My friends, put your hands upon your hearts and answer. Which of us would not tremble at the thought of that reckoning, irrevocable for all eternity? Which of us could confidently say that he had doubled the value of the capital entrusted to him? Which of us would not feel a terrible remorse for having allowed the capital to remain unproductive, or it may be for having wickedly dissipated and squandered it? My God! In going over in memory the fifty, sixty years of my life and calling to mind the immense store of Thy gifts, I see and feel that not only have I not made a good use of them, but that I have made a bad use of them, that I have profaned them and trodden them under foot. What will become of me when I appear before Thee with my few poor and damaged fruits, and when I shall have to confess that I have horribly abused Thy countless benefits? I have no hope but to cast myself at Thy feet and to beg for mercy, and to resolve to try to regain in the evening of life what I have lost in its meridian.

The answer of the lord was as it should be, great praise and an equal recompense: *"Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy*

of thy lord.'' The master rejoices with the servant; he praises him as being a good servant and faithful to his duty, two qualities befitting a servant, and hence he gives him a double reward. It was customary for kings and conquerors to give faithful and capable servants the government of one or more cities as a recompense for their services; and Our Lord, the King of kings, making this custom His own, and using a beautiful metaphor, says that He will entrust to His faithful servants the government of as many cities as they have gained talents and that He will give them a magnificent recompense over and above their services, adding that these latter are trifling and the former great. This is the idea that is ever luminous on every page of the Gospel; the reward measurelessly transcends our merits.

And here follows the second recompense, which may be only an amplification of the first: *''Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord'';* or into a participation of eternal felicity, of which the Lord is the exhaustless fountain. God, as He is being itself, and truth and wisdom and goodness, so also is He happiness itself, which goes out from Him eternally as light and heat go out from the sun. He is as an infinite ocean of light and love in which the souls of the righteous are immersed, as fish in water, and each partakes of His happiness according to his

merits and capacity. The object of their felicity is one and the same, namely, God, seen as He is, just as the sun is one and the same; but the measure in which each participates of this felicity is different, just as the measure in which we partake of the sun's light is different and according to the capacity of each.

Let us now gather up the fruit of this parable. By it Jesus Christ wished to teach us that two things are necessary in order to enter into the kingdom of the Lord; the first is the capital of divine grace, and this is furnished in diverse measure of course, but yet enough is furnished to every one; the second is our own labor, and this alone can be wanting, as it was wanting in the case of the third servant, who received one talent, and not exerting himself to make it productive was condemned. This shows that the great affair of our salvation depends wholly upon our co-operation with divine grace, and hence we can truthfully say that our salvation is in our own hands. We have all received, and we are all constantly receiving, some five, some two, some one talent from the Lord of heaven; let us not lose time; let us labor and trade and make productive what we have severally received, that on the day on which we are summoned to give an account we may hear these consoling words: *"Well done, good and faithful servants; because thou hast been faith-*

ful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord." [1]

[1] In making an application of the talents to confessors and bishops who are saints, the Church omitted the rebuke and the chastisement of the slothful servant, because, as is clear, this would have been discordant.

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